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**THE ANGLO-SOVIET JOURNAL**

The Quarterly Organ of

**THE SOCIETY FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS**

Between the Peoples of the British Commonwealth of Nations  
and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

*Edited by*

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## EDITORIAL

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WE are happy to record that the *Anglo-Soviet Journal* has received a warm welcome from all quarters. At a time when political prejudices and hatreds are very gravely distorting the truth, when national effort appears to be directed to misunderstanding rather than to understanding, objective information about the achievements of the U.S.S.R. for the well-being of the whole people is more than ever valuable. And those who realise that the only hope for humanity lies in co-operation between nations, based on mutual understanding and tolerance, have been quick to see the possibilities for increasing this understanding between two of the great nations of the world which a journal such as ours offers, and have given it ready support. An increasing support from members and friends of the S.C.R. will help both to keep the *Journal* going and to improve its quality. A decided preference has been expressed for a journal with articles on a variety of aspects of Soviet life, rather than one devoted to a single aspect. In future numbers we will do our best to satisfy our readers in this as in other respects.

This number deals with some of the arts—the theatre, opera, ballet, and music—and it describes in some measure the great cultural task which the Soviet Union has undertaken, not merely to bring all culture within the reach of every man and woman in the Soviet Union, but to train every man and woman in the appreciation of the culture of the past and the culture that is being created to-day. It is the first time in the history of the world that an attempt is being made to have a cultured nation. Hitherto there have been periods in the world's history when among certain nations there have been highly cultured and cultivated sections. To produce these cultured classes it was neces-

sary to have, at different periods, slave labour, serfdom, industrial and economic exploitation of the masses, in order that a small section of the community might have the wealth and the leisure necessary for the pursuit and the development of culture. To-day science applied to industry can replace human toil; to-day science applied to its fullest extent can produce enough to give material sufficiency to every citizen. That at least is what Soviet leaders believe, and what they are putting into practice. Under such conditions it is possible to have not merely a cultured class, but a whole cultured society, and not only possible but essential, for to-day a society which has a small cultured class, with an uncultured mass to whom modern industry and economics have given much voluntary or involuntary leisure, is doomed: at least that is what Soviet leaders believe. More than that, they believe that in a real democracy every citizen, be he the meanest worker on a collective-farm or the least skilled worker in a factory, must have the right to enjoy all the great art that the world has produced and is producing, and Soviet leaders mean a practical, not a theoretical right, a practical right which puts all this culture within their reach in an attractive form. This democratic principle inevitably influences the development of modern Soviet Art.

If music, drama, literature, art, is culture to be made part of the pattern of the community's life, it must be the kind which will evoke some response from the mass of the people. That does not mean it must be poor or vulgar, but it does mean that it must not be expressed through strange and odd forms that can be appreciated only by a highly cultivated, or even over-cultivated, esoteric group. It means that the content of art is more important than the form, that the content must have deep sincerity and be related to the life and experience of the common man, while the form must be simple. Only such art presented in this way will in time raise the standard of appreciation among the whole community to undreamed-of heights and, as a result, make possible great individual expression. During this educational process there is some sacrifice of extreme individualism, but no one who has been in a Soviet theatre or concert hall,

or seen a Soviet ballet, or visited a workers' club and made friends with the audience, will deny that this sacrifice is well worth while.

There is much interest in our country in M. Molotov, Premier and Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union. His fiftieth birthday this year was a great occasion in the Union, and we add our congratulations to the many he has received. On another page appears a biographical sketch of M. Molotov.

Two other important anniversaries occur this year. One is the centenary of the great composer Chaikovsky, and the other is the tenth anniversary of the death of Mayakovsky. In the next number of the *Journal* there will be an appreciation of Chaikovsky and his work, and his place in Soviet life.

A brief note on Mayakovsky, with an excellent translation of his poem "At the Top of My Voice," by Herbert Marshall, appears in this number.

We should like to add to Mr Marshall's note that to-day Mayakovsky has become the people's poet. He is not relegated to the occasions when he can be declaimed from the Red Square. He is read by the workers and peasants in their clubs, in their homes, and frequently in the trams on the way to work. He has been translated into a number of non-Russian Soviet languages and is equally appreciated by the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union.

In quite another sphere of Soviet activity we should like to pay tribute to the crew of the ice-breaker *Sedov* and its rescuers. Intrepid courage, resourcefulness, devotion to duty is not a monopoly of any one country, but these qualities are found in full measure in the Socialist Republic. The *Sedov's* drift towards the North Pole lasting just over two years, and its rescue by the ice-breaker *J. Stalin*, is one of those epics to the recital of which future generations will listen with bated breath. The *Sedov's* forced drift brought her nearer to the North Pole than any other ship had been,



and her crew had settled down to carry out scientific observation. In December 1939 the *Sedov* was in very grave danger, stores were low, steering-gear disabled, the ice-field breaking up. Through blizzards and in darkness, under Papanin's direction, the ice-breaker *Stalin* fought her way and reached the *Sedov*. One can imagine the meeting between the fifteen men who had spent nearly three years in the Arctic and their rescuers! It goes without saying that the rescue was an occasion for a nation-wide celebration.

## NOTE ON MAYAKOVSKY

**L**IKE all great artists Mayakovsky had to struggle unceasingly for recognition of his genius. In Tsarist Russia no one would print his poems; only in 1916 did Maxim Gorky publish his work. In Soviet Russia to-day his works are printed in millions, in all the languages of the Union. But right up to his death he had to struggle against reactionary elements, who to-day are forgotten in the limbo of history, while Mayakovsky stands out, in the words of Stalin, as "the most talented poet of our Soviet epoch."

Mayakovsky was above all a revolutionary poet, in form and content. His satire was unmerciful, his irony biting, his sweep tremendous. He wrote about everything under the sun, but always from the point of view of the new Socialist citizen. In his last poem, "At the Top of My Voice," he synthesises his own path through history and speaks, with the assurance of a Shakespeare or a Pushkin, of the permanence of his work.

And his work endures, whether it be an agit-poem on a poster warning peasants to drink only boiled water, or an epic poem to "Lenin."

All his poetry was written to be declaimed, preferably from Red Square, and none could declaim better than he himself. In my translations I have borne this in mind, and ask all readers to read aloud his poetry, to feel some pale reflection of the pulsating power of the original.

HERBERT MARSHALL.

## POETRY

### PREFACE TO "AT THE TOP OF MY VOICE"

At a meeting to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Mayakovsky's poetic activity, on 25th March 1930, before reading this poem he said:

"Very often lately those who are upset by my literary-publicist activity say that I have simply forgotten how to write poetry and that posterity will accordingly make it hot for me. I'm a resolute fellow and want myself to speak with my descendants, and not to wait and see what my critics in the future will tell them. Therefore I address myself direct to posterity in my poem 'At the Top of My Voice.'"

### AT THE TOP OF MY VOICE

First Prelude to a Poem of the Five-Year Plan  
by Vladimir Mayakovsky

(Translated from the Russian by Herbert Marshall)

Most respected  
                    comrade heirs and descendants!  
Excavating  
                    our contemporary  
                                    petrified muck,  
studying our days through dark dead centuries,  
you'll  
            maybe,  
                    ask about me,  
                                    Mayakovsky.  
  
And, maybe,  
                    your scholars will then reveal—  
swamping with erudition  
                                    questions that swarm,—  
there lived once a singer  
                                    blood all-a-boil,  
who hated most cold water raw.

Professor,  
                   take off those optical-bicycles!  
 I'll myself relate  
                   about the times  
   about myself.  
 I'm a sanitary inspector  
                   and water-carrier,  
 mobilised to the front  
                   by revolution,  
   I came  
 from the seigniorial horticulture  
 of poetry—  
                   a most capricious dame.  
 Precious muse that grows, like Mary,  
 roses  
           round  
                   a bungalow.

"Mary, Mary, quite contrary,  
           how does your garden grow?"

Some pour verses from a sprinkler,  
 some just splutter  
                   from their lips—  
 curly-headed Mitraikies,  
                   muddled-headed Kudraikies—\*  
 who the devil knows which from which!  
 No quarantine will take them in—  
 there's those mandolines again:  
 "Tara-tina tara-tina  
           t . . . . e . . . n . . n . ."

Not much of an honour,  
                   that from such roses  
 my very own statue will rise  
 over squares,  
                   with gobs of tuberculosis,  
 where whores with hooligans  
                   and—syphilis.

I'm fed  
           to the teeth  
                   with agit-prop,

\* NOTE.—"Mitraikin" and "Kudraikin" were minor poets of  
 the time, who were once "popular"—now completely forgotten.

I'd like  
     to scribble for you  
                     love-ballads,—  
 they're charming  
     and pay quite a lot.  
 But I  
     mastered myself,  
                     and crushed under foot  
 the throat  
     of my very own songs.  
 Hi listen,  
     Comrade heirs and descendants,  
 to an agitator,  
     loud-speaker-in-chief!  
 Deafening  
     poetic deluge,  
 I stride to you  
     through lyrical volumes,  
 as the live  
     with the living speaks.  
 I'll come to you  
     in the distant communist far-off,  
 but not  
     like Yessenin's rhymed knight-errants.  
 My verse will reach  
     over the peaks of eras  
 far over the heads  
     of poets and governments.  
 My verse will come,  
     but will come not ornate,—  
 not like an arrow's  
     lyrical love-flight from Eros,  
 not like a worn-out coin  
     comes to the numismat,  
 and not like the light of long-dead stars arrives.

My verse  
     with labour  
                     thrusts through weighted years  
 emerging,  
     ponderous,  
                     rock-rough,  
                             age-grim,  
 as when to-day  
     an aqueduct appears,  
 firm-grounded once  
     by the branded slaves of Rome.

You'll accidentally find  
  in barrows of books,  
wrought iron lines of long buried poems,  
handle them  
  with the care that respects  
ancient  
  but terrible weapons.

My words  
  are not used  
  to caressing ears;  
nor titillate  
  with semi-obscurities  
maiden ears  
  hidden in hair so innocent.

I open on parade  
  my pages of fighters,  
pass in review  
  their lineal front.  
My verses stand  
  in lead-heavy letters,  
ready for death  
  and for deathless glory.

Stock-still stand my poems  
  muzzle to muzzle set,  
their gaping titles aimed  
  and at the ready.  
And weapons most beloved yet,  
ever ready to  
  charge with a cheer,  
rear all alert  
  my cavalry of wit,  
tilting their rhymes,  
  sharp-pointed spears.

And every single one  
  armed to the teeth,  
that swept through twenty years  
  victorious,  
every single one,  
  to the very last leaf  
I give to you,  
  planet proletariat.







When I appear  
    in Tsi-Ka-Ka\*  
                    of coming  
                            bright decades,  
above the band  
    of skin-flint grafters  
                    in rhymes,  
I'll lift up high  
    like a bolshevik party-card,  
all the hundred books  
    of my  
        Comparty poems.

\* NOTE.—In English, C.C.C.=Central Control Commission.

## V. M. MOLOTOV

**V**YACHESLAV MOLOTOV (SCRIABINE) was born of lower middle-class parents in Koukarka Sloboda, now known as Sovietsk. The nearest town, Nolinsk, consisted of little over 3000 inhabitants, two churches, a girls' high school, an elementary school, a public library on which the town council spent 150 roubles a month: that was his early environment.

In the summer of 1899 the teachers' committee of his school gave a certificate of merit "for excellent behaviour and work" to the pupil Vyacheslaw Scriabine of Class I.

At the age of twelve he entered the Kazan Realschule, where he continued to be a model pupil, with full marks for Russian, History, Geography, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, etc. In the Realschule he became interested in politics, as were many students, and at the age of fifteen he began serious underground political work. At sixteen he joined the Kazan Bolshevik organisation. His course at the Realschule was never finished. It was not likely that he would escape the attention of the police and their spies for long. In 1909, just as Scriabine was due to take his leaving examination, he was visited by the police, arrested, and exiled for two years in the Vologda Gubernya. The Okhrana found that Molotov had been directing students' revolutionary activity, not only in his own district but in many others.

To gain an understanding of the man it is important to realise the conditions existing at this time. By 1909 all pretence at reform had been dropped by the Czar's government. The prisons were full of revolutionaries. Others were in exile. The secret police, the spies, and the agents provocateurs were everywhere. Only the Bolsheviks were carrying on revolutionary work. The other parties were insisting that the time was not ripe, that it was essential

to join with the liberal bourgeoisie and to proceed slowly on evolutionary lines, that revolutionary work must be liquidated. One of the most determined fighters against this line was the student of the Realschule, Scriabine. Never did he waver in his purpose, never did he cease his agitation among the workers and peasants. Exile and prison only confirmed him in his resolve to help to free his country from its oppression, and to free it soon, not in the dim and distant future.

While in exile in 1911 Molotov was informed that permission had been granted him to enter the St Petersburg Technical Institute. In 1912 he joined the Bolshevik newspaper *Zvezda*, and later helped to found *Pravda*, on whose editorial board he sat from the beginning.

Molotov continued his work after the outbreak of the war in 1914, was arrested in 1915, and exiled to Irkutsk Gubernya, from where he escaped in 1916, to carry on his activities in Petrograd. After the Revolution he received various highly important key posts, until in 1930 he was appointed Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars—that is, Premier.

Molotov's genius lies in administration, in making organisations work efficiently, in carrying out Lenin's and Stalin's directions for the building of socialism through the administrative apparatus. The efficiency and productivity of the country to-day is sufficient evidence of his ability. Much of his success is due to his hatred of bureaucracy, soulless officialdom, mechanical routine, and formalism, all of which he relentlessly stamps out whenever they come his way. It is only necessary to write to him with a serious complaint of some inefficiency, some act of bureaucracy, for the matter to be put right speedily. Soviet papers are full of such cases.

He has a great regard for the ordinary worker. "Our minimum demand from our political workers, especially communists, is the ability to talk with the worker, man and woman, with the peasant, man and woman, with the collective-farm worker and with the individual peasant; and particularly we demand the ability to *listen* to what these say." His visits to factories are eagerly looked forward to, and he is interested not merely in the production, but in the working conditions and in the daily life of the workers.

Always at these visits workers will ask for information, relate their difficulties to him, and receive great satisfaction from these talks.

Vyacheslav Molotov is as interested in culture as he is in administration and politics. There is hardly a scientist, author, musician, or artist who is not known to him personally. He has special conferences with authors, actors, scientists, etc., where literature, drama, science, and indeed all culture, is discussed. He is always particularly interested in their contributions to Soviet culture, often pointing out that the true artist must have creative originality, must express the exciting, pulsating life of the Soviet peoples.

Any difficulty placed before him receives immediate attention. Trenev relates how at one of these meetings the composer Glière complained that the repertory committee was interfering with one of his compositions. Seeing how easily Glière received satisfaction, he, Trenev, too complained of the difficulty he was experiencing with the publication of the collection of Don Cossack songs. The very next day his complaint received attention.

The Soviet scientists have a great respect and love for him. Academician Tsitsin, who was the Director of the Soviet Agricultural Exhibition, cannot speak too highly of him. Molotov paid almost daily visits to the exhibition during its construction. All the architectural designs and all the plans were inspected by him beforehand. Every detail interested him, and his criticisms were always found to be right.

Like all Russians, Molotov has a great love for children, and he finds peace and happiness in his own family. His visits to the children's camps are occasions of great joy. On arrival he is immediately surrounded by a group of eager youngsters. They constitute themselves his hosts and do not leave him from the moment of his arrival to the moment of his departure.

To all these administrative and human qualities he is adding those of a great statesman. With a clear idea of his country's need for peace he pursues a path laid down by his Party, with greater and greater success.

D. N. PRITT.

## TWENTY YEARS OF SOVIET FILM

THE Soviet cinema has recently (mid-February) celebrated its twentieth anniversary. The decree nationalising the film industry was signed by Lenin at the end of August 1919.

Pre-revolutionary Russia had a small-scale film production, with one or two magnates and a few pretty stars. With the October Revolution these decamped to Berlin and Paris—with rare exceptions. In the hectic first months there was virtually no production, and cinemas were “municipalised,” or subjected to a sort of syndicalised staff control system.

Cinemas “made do” by running and re-running the features already in the country; new production was confined to news-reels and short agitational pieces consisting of news and titles.

The news-reel cameraman was a figure on every front of the civil and interventionist wars. He not only had to photograph, he had—when need arose—to lay down his camera and shoot with rifle instead.

Film stock was as rare as ammunition. Eduard Tisse, the brilliant cameraman of all the Eisenstein pictures, has described the anxiety of such an experience as having only 100 feet of film with which to record the first May Day demonstration in the Red Square, Lenin’s speech and all included.

It was indeed not until 1922–1923 that the first feature films could be, and were, produced. The first immediately successful one was called *The Two Little Red Devils*, and dealt with the adventures of two boys, befriended by a Negro in the French interventionist armies in South Russia, during the period when the territory was constantly changing hands, occupied in turn by Whites, Reds, Interventionists, and even the Anarchist rabble of Makhno.

To the material lack of these days Poudovkin has attributed

the subsequent ingenuity of Soviet cinema: "While film people abroad were so busy earning their living that they went from film to film (when they could), sometimes even accepting a script they had not themselves prepared and leaving the previous film to stranger hands to cut, and had no time to reflect and experiment regarding the nature of film, the Soviet film technician, having no film stock, and therefore unable to shoot, was able to sit down and think out the best methods of shooting when eventually he should get the chance." Thus runs the Poudovkin thesis.

"Of all the arts the cinema is the most important," declared Lenin, and from this time on began that flourishing of production that became world-famous as the classic period of the Soviet silent cinema.

In the year or two immediately following 1922-1923 new films were imported from abroad. The Soviet spectator and technician became familiar with the work of Chaplin, D. W. Griffith, Murnau, and Lubitsch. When, a year or so later, Fairbanks (Senior) and Mary Pickford visited U.S.S.R. they found themselves as famous and popular as elsewhere in the world.

The film school G.I.K. (The State Institute of Cinema) was already in being, with its faculties for budding directors, camera men and women, actors and actresses, art directors, etc. Here teacher Kouleshov expounded the gospel of montage, to be inferred, so the lesson ran, from the works of the Americans, and particularly the master, Griffith. One of his most talented pupils was a chemical engineer named Poudovkin.

German expressionism was the chief influence on the brilliant pair, still in their teens, Kozintsev and Trauberg (the elder Trauberg brother, Lev). Two new figures endeavoured from the start to find a style "cinematic," peculiar to cinema independent of the influences of other arts, and deriving not even from previous cinema achievements, but directly from the relation between real phenomena and the cinematographic apparatus. One was Dziga Vertov, with his theory—then stimulating but now seen as naïve—of the "camera eye," viz. that nothing must be arranged, nothing staged; the camera must simply be an eye selecting

from, but not otherwise interfering with, the stream of reality. The second was a young architectural student, who had worked in cabaret and circus, Eisenstein, whose lust for realism led him to use "non-acting material" (viz. types selected for their visual correspondence to the external qualities of the desired character rather than for acting ability), into attempting his first film (*Strike*) within the four walls of a real factory instead of building sets.

By 1925 already two works had been produced, *Potemkin* by Eisenstein and *Mother* by Poudovkin, which were to stand out as classic landmarks in the history of the cinema.

The finest leading films of the three years need only to be catalogued to stamp the period. Eisenstein turned out: *October (Ten Days that Shook the World)*; *Old and New (The General Line)*; Poudovkin: *The End of St Petersburg*, *The Heir to Jenghiz Khan (Storm over Asia)*; Dovzhenko: *Earth*; Kozintsev and Trauberg (turning away from German expressionism to French impressionism): *New Babylon*; Trauberg (the younger brother, Ilya): *Blue Express*; Ermler: *The Stump of an Empire*; Turin: *Turksib*; *Room*; *No. 3 Meshchanskaya*; *Street (Bed and Sofa)*.

These were films which proved so effective to any audience, speaking whatever language, that they were paid the ultimate tribute—*forbidden*, as too effective to be shown—in innumerable countries. They were films which also left an indelible impression on the whole body of world film production that was to come after.

What was the principal technical factor in the style of the old Soviet silent classics which gave them their outstanding influence? This was (blessed word) "montage."

Technically montage is simply the production of effects by the sticking together of shorter pieces of film into a larger strip. Later there arose in the Soviet film world damaging mechanical conceptions of montage which laid exaggerated or even exclusive emphasis on this technical method of montage. Acting, direction, scenerios hardly mattered, even casually assembled pieces could be so synthesised as to produce the right effect.

But, properly regarded, montage was not limited in this way. It was the dialectic conception that in the widest

sense a whole is determined by the conflict of its parts, applied to every stage of film-making.

The rest of the film world was busy assembling its film effects from parts selected solely on a basis of dramatic content. The Soviet cinema selected its parts from among those equally eligible on the ground of dramatic content, in accordance with their relation to all aspects (including form) of the future whole.

Influenced by Marxist dialectics, the Soviet film masters found forms corresponding to the processes of development universally inherent in nature, and hence "put over" their films to any audience reinforcing the acceptability of what might have been rejected as an unformulated content. Some of the passages in Eisenstein's films constitute classic "lecture room" demonstrations of the unity of opposites and the transformation of quantity into quality.

The period 1925-1929 was associated no less with a development of the technical basis of the cinema. The U.S.S.R. is a very big country and many nationalities reside in it. To make a film accessible to the whole country enormous numbers of screens had to be organised. Films also had to be translated into many languages. Soviet films, for internal consumption alone, had to be titled in more than eighty different languages. At the end of this period there were numbers of production companies. Sovkino in Moscow and Leningrad; Kultkino making teaching films; Belgoskino in Byelo-Russia; Vufku in Ukraine; Gruzkino and Armenkino; Mejrabpom attached to the Workers' International Relief; a film section of the All Russian Trade Unions, etc.

The production of feature films, of which the first, it will be recalled, had appeared in 1922-1923, had risen as follows: 1922-1923 — 12 films; 1923-1924 — 41; 1925-1926 — 71; 1928-1929—121.

Projection units (figures for R.S.F.S.R. only) rose from 2600 in 1925 to 8000 in 1929; of which 1400 in 1925 and 2800 in 1929 were in clubs, and 450 in 1925 and 4300 in 1929 were in villages. Copies of feature films in use rose from 5500 in 1924-1925 to 30,100 in 1928-1929.

This was progress, impressive in rate but, of course, still very inadequate in amount. Further, almost the whole of



the technical apparatus was imported. Projectors, lights, lenses, cameras, and film stock all came from abroad.

Hence the application to the film industry of the First, and later the Second, Five-Year Plans aimed not only at multiplying the cinema network many times, but at making the cinema industry complete and self-contained.

Figures attained, as well as those included in the Third Five-Year Plan, are an index of the extraordinary achievement in these respects. Whereas a few years ago there was no film stock output and all apparatus was imported, now every form of stock and apparatus is manufactured at home. It must further be recalled that, in this period, sound films have been introduced, which has in any case involved a technical reconstruction of the industry.

Film projection units, for example, rose from 9000 in 1931 to 29,200 (17,000 in the villages) in 1934, but of these a great number were, as some still are, silent.

The Third Five-Year Plan involves the disappearance of all silent screens and the increase of sound projection units more than six times, from 9000 in 1937 to 60,000 in 1940 (exclusive of those in schools and other places not open to the general public). The network in the countryside will increase 1108 per cent.: 50,000 standard and 40,000 sub-standard sound projectors, with 35,000 electrical generating apparatus for portable work, will be produced during the Third Five-Year Plan, or to express it another way, accommodation for spectators (calculated on a basis of annual occupation of seats)—which rose as follows: 1928—310 million; 1936—710 million; 1939—950 million—will increase to 2700 million (45 per cent. instead of as now 30 per cent. in the countryside) by 1942.

The principal successes among modern Soviet films are printed in *one thousand copies*, and the average, which was 210 copies in 1937, became 464 copies in 1939. *Chapayev*, it is calculated, was seen by 50 million Soviet film-goers; *Peter I* (part one) by 23 million; *Lenin in October* by 21 million; the three *Maxim* films by about 20 million each; *Professor Mamlock* by 11 million. Six million Soviet spectators saw *Alexander Nevsky* in the one month of last December alone.

The output of film stock proceeded from near zero to 183.6 million feet in the period 1931-1933; 828.1 million in 1934-1936; 1538.1 million in 1937-1939. In the one year 1942 it will be 1540 million feet.

The technical basis already suffices for the manufacture of colour films, cartoon-process films, animated puppet films. In addition to the studios already mentioned which have been entirely remade, studios exist, or are nearly finished, in the Azerbaidzhan, Tadzhik, Kazakh, and Kirghiz republics. There are special studios for children's films and scientific films, and news-reel studios abound.

The whole industry is now co-ordinated under a single title, Soyuzkino.

The building of this giant industry has not been achieved without serious creative crises in the early stages.

It is now generally realised in the outside world that the industrialisation and collectivisation of the first and early second Five-Year Plan periods represented an upheaval in the lives of the people that could only be described as a second revolution, in some respects even more severe, more far-reaching.

The concentration of energy on this upheaval of course had its reflection in the "ideological superstructure," as Marxist jargon has it, including the general artistic life of the country. In the cinema these effects were multiplied to a shattering degree by the technical revolution occurring in the cinema at the same time: the transition from silent films to sound.

The period of flowering of the classic silent Soviet cinema was followed by a period of almost complete collapse, a barren period in which films of quality were rare, almost accidents, a period from which creative film production had almost to be rebuilt anew.

This can be expressed even statistically. The number of sound features produced, trifling before 1931, rose as follows: 1931-1933—41; 1934-1936—97; 1937-1939—137. These figures are fewer in number and similar in rate of increase to those already given for silent features in the period 1922-1923 to 1928-1929.

The only notable examples among early sound films were

*The Road to Life* (Ekk), made partly under non-Soviet inspiration; *Enthusiasm*, a novelty, but a blind alley; and *Counterplan*, an impressive but ponderous study on a theme then vitally important, by Yutkevich and Ermler.

Poudovkin botched, and many of the masters held aloof, found excuses in the long and profound research into projected subjects which has always been a prerogative of Soviet artists, and left the field to those who were less self-important, but alas less gifted.

What were the causes of this interregnum? They are not listed here in relative importance, but simply jotted down as factors contributing.

1. The technical shortage. Soviet manufactured film stock in its initial stages was of course undependable. Camera-men found their exposure a matter of hazard, not knowing the speed of the stock. Laboratory work was clumsy. It takes a conscientious man to work in such circumstances, having a reputation and knowing he will be blamed by the public for defects which lie in his tools.

2. The sound position. Even before it was in general use abroad Soviet film directors eagerly welcomed sound, and described what they would do with it, thirsted after it. But sound was not available in the U.S.S.R. until long after it came into use abroad. It is not easy to transform a section of so mighty a plan of reconstruction and development of the film industry, plotted before sound, to include a technical device that turns the whole business topsy-turvy and comes in just after your plan (for five years) has already been set in motion. For a long time sound was very bad. Again, it takes a conscientious man to work cheerfully in the old medium already abandoned by his foreign rivals, or in the new medium with less reliable resources.

3. Isolation. Shortage of valuta restricted, nearly eliminated, import of films from abroad during the First Five-Year Plan. Denied the opportunity of comparison, young Soviet film technicians developed exaggerated ideas of the qualities of their own still imperfect films, and the vain old veterans became unnecessarily critical of these imperfections, and still more terrified of taking the plunge onto the studio floor. An unhealthy atmosphere grew up: the young self-satisfied, the

old contemptuous of the young, secretly basking in their memories of past foreign adulation.

4. Alienation from subject. Herein lay the social roots of formalism. The older masters were men with minds formed before the October Revolution. The early revolutionary themes inspired them. The themes of the reconstruction period, the matters that engrossed 170 million of their fellow-citizens in the period of the First Five-Year Plan, could not be felt by them directly, but only indirectly. What can it mean to a man who has never worked in a factory that some new machine or new process has lightened labour? What can a new separator mean to a man who has never had the task of separating milk by hand? The new themes, intensely dramatic for their audiences, became for the masters only the subject for a formal exercise in presentation.

5. The montage theory. Just as the desire for sound coincided with other technical deficiencies to hamstring production at the outset of the First Five-Year Plan, so, curiously enough, the availability of sound coincided with the prosperity of the period emerging into the Second Five-Year Plan, and brought with it a new problem, the problem of personality. The speaking figure on the screen is more individual, less symbolic, than the silent figure. Prosperity brings opportunity of self-expression, development, and attention to individuals. The narrow, mechanical conception of montage as a synthesis only in the cutting process, was unfitted to cope with the problem of expressing personality. The extremist theories of the "camera eye" and "non-acting actor" type, instead of being a fertile means of obtaining new effects became simply a fetter restraining the film creator from using every available resource, and limiting him to a certain class only.

Then, just about as far away in time from the start of Soviet sound film as *Potemkin* had been from the start of Soviet silent films, came *Chapayev* (by the brothers Vasiliev), equally historic, because masterfully solving (to the overwhelming satisfaction of its Russian-speaking audiences) the problem of the expression of personality in film. That is to say, a realistic, "all round" expression; not just in the Western sense of drawing out the high-powered personality

of a star, but the acting, the depiction of a personality in relation to the social forces developing around him.

At this decisive stage the weight of the Communist Party's influence and authority firmly directed attention towards clear statement of content rather than the form it was set in.

The picture held as exemplary was not Ermler's able *Peasants* nor Dziga Vertov's moving swan-song *Three Songs of Lenin*, nor the pictorially beautiful *We From Kronstadt* of Dzigan, but a simple, formless, naturalistic narrative of treachery and sabotage: *The Party Card*.

The line of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in this controversy should be clearly understood. The Party was perfectly well aware that, as a writer said during the Writers' Conference that discussed realism and formalism: "There can be something worse than formalism in art, and that is—no form at all." The Party was perfectly well aware that realism, the presentation by art to the spectator of an impression corresponding to reality, is a constructed, formed effect, and not an automatic sequel to mere naturalism.

But, as Lenin once explained, the Bolshevik method is to decide which link in the chain is the one that needs to be hauled on at the particular moment and then, for the time, concentrate all forces on hauling on it. This carries the obvious corollary that the risk is run of overlooking difficulties which may arise out of the connection with the other links, and it is necessary to be continually alert to notice in time when one link begins to grow and transcend another in importance in the course of developing relations. At the time of the controversy excessive naturalism was not the danger, formalism was. Formalism made rotten and vitiated the usefulness of some of the finest talent, introvertedly concentrated on experiments for its own satisfaction, turning its back on the requirements of the occasion and on the audience, so that the creation risked ceasing to be a communication. Naturalism was the weakness only of the untalented, and could easily be corrected later.

Climax occurred when, rare event in Soviet life, the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. made time to see Eisenstein's current opus (still unfinished after millions of roubles' expenditure, and two years' work, and one rewriting half way

through), *Bezhin Meadow*. The Central Committee decided it should be junked.

The film technicians' organisation was invited to condemn it. They insisted on seeing it first. They saw it. Followed a conference, during which for days Eisenstein stubbornly defended his viewpoint, at last yielded and conceded the principal and most generally held criticisms of his colleagues. Eisenstein was "punished" by being given a long holiday at the Crimea, the best scenarist, composer, and assistant director in the U.S.S.R., and unlimited resources as soon as he had chosen, and was ready to start on, his next subject.

The battle was won. A fertile period followed, synchronising with the present great growth of prosperity, and with it general enjoyment of the arts, in the U.S.S.R. Eisenstein's own next picture was a triumphant popular success, and the film world turned its attention to smoothing out the excesses of naturalism, and did so in its stride, by the simple process of raising the general technical ("film cultural") level.

This zigzag method of progress, characteristic of the Soviet Union, may be hectic, but it usually gets ahead faster than the alternative of sitting looking at the chain, not hauling on anything at all, and arguing about the exact volume of the forces that should be applied simultaneously to all the various links.

Present Soviet film production is at an extraordinarily high level. Here is an interesting review of recent "product and product in progress," which shows the range of themes, listing only the most noteworthy (not otherwise named above). An asterisk indicates an unfinished film.

**HISTORICAL.**—*Peter I* (first and second part). Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*. Poudovkin's *Minin and Pozharsky*, dealing with the Polish occupation of Moscow following the Boris Godounov period. Poudovkin's forthcoming *Souvorov*, *Stepan Razin*, *Bogdan Khmelnitsky*, *Georgi Suakadze* (*Georgian Story*), *Sabieqli*, an Azerbaidzhan hero.

**CLASSICAL.**—Films from stories by Gogol (in colours) and Chekhov. The three magnificent films of Gorky's autobiography.

**REVOLUTIONARY HISTORICAL.**—*Lenin in October*; *Lenin in 1918*; *The Man with the Gun*; *The Great Dawn*; *The Deputy of the Baltic* (the story of Professor Timiryazev); *The First Mounted*, on the

cavalry army of Voroshilov and Budienny; *Amangel Bey*, on a Tadzhik hero; Dovzhenko's *Schchor's* on a Ukrainian hero; films of the defence of Tsaritsyn and Petrograd during the Civil War.

BIOGRAPHICAL.—Kozintsev and Trauberg's *Karl Marx*. Films on Ordzhonikidze, Sverdlov, Kirov, Dzerzhinsky, and Liebknecht.

PRE-REVOLUTIONARY.—Kozintsev and Trauberg's three Maxim films; Ermiler's two remarkable films on *A Great Citizen* (founded on Kirov), dealing with the development and decline of the opposition; *Out of the Spark*, dealing with Stalin's work in pre-revolution days in Transcaucasia; *General Rehearsal*, dealing with 1905; *Lone White Sail*.

DEFENCE THEMES.—*The Frontier*, *The Thirteen Flyers*, *Tank-Drivers*, *The Political Instructor*,\* *A Rifle Company*, *Red Planes Fly East*, *The Birth of a Commander*.

YOUTH THEMES.—*Komsomolsk*, *The Brother of a Hero*, *The Siberians*, *The Daredevil*, *The Goalkeeper*.

THEMES ON WESTERN BYELORUSSIA AND WESTERN UKRAINE.—Several are in production. Some from well-known Polish novels by Wanda Wasileva and Ivan Franko.

ANTI FASCIST THEMES.—*The Oppermans* (from Feuchtwanger's *The Oppenheims*), *The Fight Goes on*, *Peat-Bog Soldiers*.

CONTEMPORARY SOVIET THEMES.—*The Teacher*\* (a prize competition scenario); *In Quest of Happiness* (Panferov); *A Member of the Government*,\* about a collective-farm girl deputy of the Supreme Soviet; Eisenstein's *The People Immortal*, on the subject of the amazing building of the Ferghana Canal.

COMEDIES.—Alexandrov's *Volga-Volga* (in colour); Alexandrov's *Cinderella*, about a girl who leaves domestic service to become a Stakhanovite weaver; *The Rich Bride*; *Tractor Driver* (fun on the farm); *Dearly Beloved Girls*, a family-life comedy.

DOCUMENTARY.—The Arctic films on the Sibiryakov, the Chelyuskin rescue, the flight to the North Pole, the Papaninites at the North Pole, the voyage and rescue of the *Sedov*. War films, far more remarkable than any recorded by Western cameramen, from Abyssinia, Spain, and China.

There is no point in prolonging the list with cartoons and puppet films, etc.

After twenty years the Soviet cinema has built an immense technical base, a fantastically large network, and reached an exceedingly high level and variety of production.

To foreign tastes its films will always seem slow, for we here are adjusted to the two-feature programme length for a subject of an hour and a few minutes, the U.S.S.R. audience to the single-feature length of a few minutes less than two

\* These films are in preparation.



hours, which requires more deliberate treatment. Further, never again will Soviet films have the universal appeal abroad of their silent days, for the qualities of the best of them reside nowadays in the profound expression of character, and of character in relation to environment, which translation of dialogue can never render adequately. Precisely this quality, however, which is a drawback abroad is what gives them their tremendous popularity, interest, and usefulness for the Soviet world, which has attracted the best Soviet actors, writers, and musical composers to work for it, and which is an "importance" (in Lenin's phrase) greater—it must be admitted—than the rôle so far achieved by cinema in the world outside.

IVOR MONTAGU.



## THE SOVIET THEATRE

THE main contribution to the Russian, and now Soviet, theatre during the last fifty years or so, was to be found in the work of Stanislavsky of the Moscow Art Theatre, of Meyerhold, Tairov, and Oklopkov.

Stanislavsky is important for two reasons. First, he was the greatest exponent and voice of the reaction of naturalism in the theatre against the decaying Romanticism of the late nineteenth century. Secondly, he was able to put his theories into practice, and carry them to their logical conclusion. In recent years no one else in the theatre has had a similar opportunity outside the Soviet Union.

It would be quite impossible in an article to examine the theories of this great master in detail; indeed it would be superfluous, since he has described the heart of his work in his book *The Actor Prepares*. A summary may, however, give some idea. Stanislavsky's main problem was to discover what he called "Theatrical Truth," in other words, how to reveal an entire character by movement, gesture, and expression so that the actor suggests an entirely truthful and profound portrait.

Success depends clearly on the depth to which the search is carried, for almost any modern actor would say that that is precisely what he tries to do. His success can be measured only against the result on the stage of the Art Theatre. It is not his fault if he falls short. Stanislavsky's training is more thorough and more serious than that of any school outside the U.S.S.R. At the beginning the student is shown how to realise all his potentialities, and to represent his feelings truthfully and convincingly. He is given a liberal education in Art, History, Philosophy, and Literature. His body is trained to execute any movement naturally. When he comes to tackle a part he can approach it with the whole

of himself, as it were alive, and with all his capacities ready to enrich the part and bring it to life.

Perfection is the result of having enough money to spend on time, given the necessary talent. In every country there are plenty of actors with talent, but there is no group with enough money to develop them.

Plays have to be rehearsed in at the most a month, sometimes in three weeks or a fortnight. If the actor manages to sketch in a part the least truthfully it is considered a success, though often he achieves success because of an attractive personality, or because he says some of his lines in an amusing manner.

Stanislavsky made talent of such an order but a starting-point for intensive work. Rehearsals under his direction lasted until the play was perfect, sometimes three or six months, or even longer. *The Cherry Orchard* is said to have taken a year. Until the actors had completely got inside the characters and realised all their possibilities the play was unfinished.

Many stories are told of his exacting demands. At a rehearsal of *The Cherry Orchard* one of the characters had to upset a teapot and burn her hand. The actress who was playing this was unable through many rehearsals to act it convincingly, so Stanislavsky had the teapot filled with real hot water. Apparently he was satisfied.

The result of this approach to the drama as seen upon the stage is quite extraordinary. All the characters, even the minor characters, differ. Each is a precise and careful study of a particular character. Even those who have nothing to say—known in England as “walk-ons”—are alive. We are aware of them; they charge the scene with added significance. For example, in the court scene of *Resurrection* the jurymen have to take the oath by kissing a Bible held by a priest. The jury consists of a cross-section of pre-revolutionary Russia: rich business men, small merchants, an officer, a large landowner, a prince, and rich peasants. Each rises and approaches the priest in a different, his own, manner. Besides being comic and good satire, the action, in revealing the characters of the jurymen, heightens the drama, since the audience immediately becomes uneasily aware that the

prisoner is likely to be condemned, and broadens it by giving the story a universal character.

The theatre depends even more upon plays than upon actors. And the Art Theatre owed its success quite as much to the plays of Chekhov and Gorky as to its actors and producers. By 1914 the vein had been worn thin, however. The modern Soviet critics say that by that date, with a few rare exceptions, the plays had become as trifling as those of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The splendid technique of the Art Theatre was being used to portray characteristics rather than character. A dangerous possibility of this technique.

The Revolution brought a new life, and for the theatre new life meant new themes, a fresh audience, and new talent from a different strata of society. That is all the theatre demands, for it is an instrument more or less successful for portraying life, and depends ultimately on a large and paying public. In the case of the Art Theatre the instrument was perfect, and thus more capable than any of the other theatres in surviving the many theories and movements that sprang up, in criticising and evaluating, and, finally, through its whole tradition it was able to portray the truth of the Revolution itself, though the presentation did not always take place upon its own stage, but often upon the stages of its pupils.

The period between 1918 and 1930 was one of flourishing experiment. Means had to be found to express not only new ideas but new relationships upon the stage. The amazing width and richness of the new world had to be compressed to manageable proportions. For instance, in showing condemnation of class distinctions, the ideas and actions of two separate classes might have to be represented; and, since events might take place in many places, a great many scenes were necessary. The mass and mass-action upon which the Revolution was founded had become of greater significance to the public than the individual. The individual character himself, a commissar or a worker, was an example himself, a representative of a movement, in the same way as the capitalist, rather than one unique human being, acted upon by circumstances, reacting.

Furthermore there was an urgent necessity to use every means as a weapon in the struggle, the Press, the films, and the theatre. Thus a great many plays were designed to spur the audience to action of some specific kind, a good modern example of which, though an American play, is *Waiting for Lefty*, by Clifford Odets.

The difficulty in carrying out any of these aims can be imagined only by comparing such with those of the older dramatists, who, sprung from a tradition, were not asked to deal fundamentally with more than one social group, with few changes of scene. The two most vigorous innovators of this period were Tairov and Meyerhold, and it was significant for the future that Meyerhold was a member of the Art Theatre.

Tairov met the situation with a theory that he summarised in a phrase, "the theatricalisation of the theatre," one of those phrases that may appear a little ambiguous to everyone except the originator, but nevertheless do on reflection nearly describe a process. Great events were taking place, therefore they can be presented only in a dramatic manner, he argued. The careful study of character of the Art Theatre, while admirable for other purposes, was inappropriate in suggesting the heroic, or large. The individuals of a group were therefore depersonalised, shown as a mass; while the leading characters, in keeping with the general scheme, were types rather than individuals.

The use of symbols and symbolic gesture achieved an economy and a quick response from the audience. To facilitate movement, and to keep the concentration of the audience upon the movement, a raked platform or a suggestive wooden structure suitable to the "line" of the play was used, instead of realistic scenery. Gestures were exaggerated, costumes were bizarre, and masks were often distorted caricatures of the human face. At its best, this kind of theatre is great fun for the experimental director. The planning of the play is all important, groups have to be moved in a rhythmical order following the "line," bold lighting effects have to be designed, the individual work of the actor is in a large measure transferred to the director. Perhaps that is the reason why so many directors, but chiefly on the Continent

and especially in Germany, have at some time tended towards these theories. Nevertheless a great versatility is demanded from the actor. Tairov summarised this necessity in another phrase, "the synthetic actor." In other words, an actor should be able to sing, mime, dance, and be an acrobat, and should therefore be able to play comedy as well as tragedy.

Thus he developed the talents and personalities of his actors in the widest possible way consistent with his broad aims. Such a theory is a very good one for any kind of theatre, after all.

Meyerhold's work as seen upon the stage showed a compactness and an economy of scenery and movement rarely achieved elsewhere. For instance, the only scenery used in *The Forest* was a platform running from the front of the stage up and back, and a swing. The back of the stage was bare except for a few curtains. There were no tabs. The effect depended entirely upon the movement and speech of the actors, and their co-ordination, and the "business," the miming and clowning, and quick, dramatic surprises, of which liberal use was made.

The latest tendency, though it had its origins and beginnings earlier, became of importance with the Second Five-Year Plan. The experimental fourteen years or so in the theatre correspond with the early days of socialism, but as the public became more settled in the new regime, and as life became more clearly confined to the everyday task of building a modern socialist state, fresh problems arose for the theatre. It had become possible, for instance, to show the effects of a prison labour-camp upon the stage because the effects had had time to show themselves in life. And similarly the results of Soviet policy upon primitive tribes and in backward areas. A play about a collective-farm could now really portray a new unit in society, and deal with its specific human problems. The question as to how it should be done was widely disputed both in theory and practice. The result was what is known as Socialist Realism. The old naturalism was too inelastic, while formalism at best can only skate over human problems; and since society is composed of individuals it follows that at most times personal character and personal problems count for a great

deal. The Art Theatre, which though it had been admired had been thought a trifle bourgeois in the early years, now became popular, for it was by its tradition—having opened itself sensibly to the revolutionaries—the theatre most capable of tackling the new problems, not so far distant after all from the old. Meyerhold and Tairov, strange as it may seem, in turn were regarded as conservatives.

An interesting director of the new movement was Okhlopkov, a pupil of Meyerhold, and thus a descendant of the Art Theatre. He found how immensely more impressive is a spectacle when seen from a few feet, a discovery that has been made before but which has been lost sight of since about the end of the eighteenth century, when the last bit of the apron-stage was lopped off. Even so the performance was seen at a short distance by very few of the audience. Okhlopkov placed his stage, or stages, either in the middle or just at the sides of the theatre, with the audience sitting round. The audience immediately formed a near relationship with the actor, and became as it were part of the play.

One of the most remarkable of his productions was *Aristocrats*, a play based on the book known in England as *The White Sea Canal*, and played some time ago at Unity Theatre in a more conventional setting. It was played on two stages, set in opposite corners of the theatre and joined with a bridge. There were a great number of different scenes and the changes were effected by switching a battery of spots on and off and illuminating the stage upon which the action was taking place. Meanwhile the actors gathered on the other to await the change.

Certain conventions are obviously necessary. For instance a snowstorm was needed, and so two masked stage-hands ran on to the stage and pelted the characters with confetti. If a table was needed they ran on and held a cloth in the shape of a table. A river was represented by shaking a large piece of stuff violently to represent waves. They may sound of doubtful effect, but when you are in the theatre you hardly notice them. It is the marvellous character-acting that holds the entire attention: the young prostitute going mad in her agony of indecision between old and new, and only a few feet in front of your eyes.

When the Revolution began, the Soviet Theatre gained a new and immense paying audience, eager and keen. The working class, which had been unaccustomed, because unable, to go to the theatre, packed every available theatre in the towns, including the Art Theatre. The trade unions, the army, and the factories helped the theatres by buying blocks of tickets in advance to resell to their members, thus guaranteeing revenue. The Government, which has persistently shown far more concern than any other for the people's amusement, guaranteed each theatre against failure.

Actors and actresses became permanent salaried workers, and could develop their faculties freed from the tricks bred by a continuous worry whether they will ever get another part. Directors could concentrate on their proper functions, without having to spend a large part of their time in looking for finances.

Soon amateur groups, in factories and collective-farms, were founded by the people themselves, stimulated by what they had seen. They were guided in their work by teachers from the theatres in Moscow. The groups in turn enriched the theatre by sending their most talented members to Moscow, some of whom were retained, the rest being sent back, either to work and teach in the local town, or in other parts of the Union. So proficient have these groups become that they now have their own theatre in Moscow, the Theatre of Folk-Art, in which a succession of groups perform. It is interesting to notice that many of these give plays on homely themes devised by themselves, and in which their native dances and songs are the predominant feature, an accomplishment which to us, whose folk-art seems to have perished almost irretrievably with the industrial revolution, opens up very attractive possibilities.

Together with this movement has grown another, no less important, the National Theatre.

Since 1918 the various states of the Union have been given equality of freedom and status, and while the content of their life is socialist the form is nationalist. In consequence they have enjoyed an amazing renaissance, in some cases a positive naissance, of political and cultural life. Now they are creating a theatre. The Georgian Theatre, one of the



best known because one of the oldest, is remarkable in that it has a repertory of original plays by Georgian writers. Almost every nationality has its own theatre exemplifying its contribution to the art—Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, Bashkiria, Kazakhstan, etc., etc. The future of the Soviet theatre therefore seems assured, since its roots are so firmly and widely planted; and Moscow will gain as much from the rest of the country as it has given.

After seeing and living in the Soviet Theatre for any length of time, those of us who are interested ask ourselves what and how much we can learn and use in the West. Some time before 1914 Jacques Coppeau, now Director of the Comédie Française and founder of the famous Compagnie des Quinze, went to Moscow and studied in the school of Stanislavsky, with the result that when he returned to Paris he set about founding a school for the training of actors and producers. It is a fundamental and immediate necessity if we are to possess a theatre comparable to the Russian, because the perfection at which they have arrived is the result, chiefly, of years of training. To produce an actor capable of walking on a stage and playing a small part takes at least three years, sometimes longer. Furthermore time must elapse before the school is established and produces results that successfully challenge the established order.

BASIL BURTON.

#### *Editors' Note*

The criticism against Meyerhold was not only that he had become conservative in his innovations. He had lost himself in the maze of the intricacies of productions. Mechanical formalism had conquered creative expression. He refused to take account of the changing life around him, and was finally reduced to putting on such plays as *La Dame aux Camélias* in a naturalistic setting, which was indeed an anticlimax for Meyerhold. His actors found it difficult to work with him and the homogeneity which in the earlier period characterised his company was fast disappearing. Since his theatre was ceasing to serve the community, and



he himself refused to take account of the community, support was withdrawn from him. A period of inactivity, and time to think, appears to have had a beneficial effect. In 1938 he joined the Moscow Art Theatre, where he is now one of the staunchest supporters of Stanislavsky's work. He told a friend that he feels years younger now.

To a lesser degree the criticism of Meyerhold held good of Tairov. For a while after dropping formalistic productions he was inactive. Now he is taking first-rate productions to different parts of the Union, and is doing much for the development of the theatre in districts where it was non-existent before the Revolution.

## THE THEATRE FOR YOUTH

IT was in 1918 that a young girl of sixteen and a half conceived the idea of having a theatre in which plays should be given for children. In 1918 civil war was raging, food was lacking, heating was lacking, both allies and enemies were sending their men and their money to intervene on behalf of the Whites. Yet it was in 1918 that the Theatre for Youth, as we know it to-day, was born. Natalie Satz, the young girl in question, found an ally in Lunacharsky, who was then Commissar of Education. Beyond giving her a building and his blessing Lunacharsky could do nothing.

Her enthusiasm carried her over insurmountable obstacles. Having found a hall—no matter that it had no heating—she set about collecting a cast. When she had succeeded in doing this she found that the actors needed a good deal of training before they would get across to the young audience.

Plays presented a great difficulty. At that time they must needs be politically educational. Adaptations of *Arabian Nights* which portrayed Persian lords and their amours were hardly suitable. Equally unsuitable was a play, specially written by a doctor, in which the action took place in the abdomen and the characters were the tongue, stomach, and intestines. Finally it was found that the best plays for children could be written by teachers with a literary gift.

The idea of a Theatre for Youth—or Children's Theatre as it is better known abroad—was taken up seriously by older people. The Moscow State Theatre for Youth, which was till 1937 part of the Central House for the Arts Education of children, claims that the first Children's Theatre proper was organised by them in 1920, that Natalie Satz's was merely an impermanent company. In 1922 Bryantsev organised the Leningrad Theatre for Youth, which in 1936 gave birth to the Second Leningrad Theatre for Youth under the direction

of Boris Zon, one of Bryantsev's most able producers and directors.

Kharkov organised a Theatre for Youth in 1932 and Kiev followed about 1933. Here in 1935 a beautiful new theatre was built in about three months. More theatres followed in Moscow—it has now nine—while other towns, stimulated by these, followed suit. To-day there are nearly one hundred Theatres for Youth in the Soviet Union, each with its permanent company of actors, producers, and director.

Until 1936 all theatres were under the control of the Commissariat of Education. In that year the theatre and other arts activities were handed over to the Commission for the Arts. There is an All-Union Commission which co-ordinates the work of the Union Republics and which plans all Union activities, and there are Republic Commissions which are concerned with the arts in each Republic. The financing of the theatres is a simple matter in the U.S.S.R. Children pay for their seats a price varying from 80 kopecks with a school party to 2 R. 50 as individuals, (twopence to ninepence). The variations in price are due partly to the different conditions under which different theatres are run and partly to the different seating in the theatre. All the expenditure not covered by receipts, and this is by far the greater part, is covered by a contribution from the Republic Exchequer. The municipal exchequer will often make its contribution, while a patron factory, a trade union, or professional union will nearly always make a contribution of its own.

The Theatre for Youth, like the adult theatre, has this unique advantage over theatres anywhere else in the world, the advantage of complete economic security. This is an important factor in the high standard of theatrical work.

Conditions of employment, pay, hours, etc., vary somewhat with the individuality of the theatre. Let me here take this opportunity of once again refuting the statement that the Soviet system destroys individuality. I have visited some ten Children's Theatres in the Union and my visits generally lasted some days. In Leningrad I spent two weeks. I found every theatre had a complete individuality of its own, which differed in many respects from every other theatre, because the personnel in every theatre differed from that of

every other theatre. They were all united in their political beliefs, they were all united in the purpose and aims of a Children's Theatre. There were other factors common to all, the high regard for the actor's art, the respect for their young spectators, the belief that only the best was good enough for the children. But they differed in the organisation of the work, in the emphasis laid on different aspects of the work, in the presentation of the plays and in the repertory of plays.

The theatre is part of the arts education of children. It is considered an essential part of the emotional and cultural education of the child which will help him to develop into an harmonious cultured adult. Incidentally these theatres serve as observation grounds for the emotional reactions, needs, and desires of children and adolescents, and have contributed much to the knowledge of children in this respect.

*The Organisation of a Theatre for Youth.*—At the head of a theatre is the director appointed to-day by the Commission for Arts. He directs the policy of the theatre, often produces plays, and has a say in every production. Then some theatres, like those in Leningrad and Kiev, may have two or three producers who may also be actors. Others, like the State Theatre of Youth in Moscow, will have a chief producer, responsible for the final appearance of every production. Every theatre has a choreography director, in charge not merely of dancing but of all movement on the stage; a scenic director, responsible for stage designs and sets; and a music director, a musician who will adapt or compose music for the plays. Some may have a special lighting director, and also a costume and make-up director, while every theatre has its own permanent orchestra and conductor.

The work of the theatre is divided into sections. There is a section for the production of plays, there is an education section for work with the children and the school, and there is a section for the training of actors. The older children's theatres have their own studios, where their actors are trained. There are frequent, regular meetings of the directors of the different departments and sections, and there are regular meetings of the whole theatre personnel for the

discussion of the various problems to which their work gives rise. Before the end of the year, which is June, plans are drawn up for the following year, and a budget to cover the cost of the year's activities, including expansion of activities, is drawn up and submitted to the Arts Commission. There is no haggling over the amount required. On the contrary, the final allocations to the theatres may be greater than the sums asked for.

*The Actors.*—It is a principle of the Theatres for Youth that their actors should be young and versatile. They must be able to dance, sing, and play any instrument that a play may require, and many of them need to be acrobats. All the ordinary qualities, speech, mime, etc., are demanded in greater perfection from an actor in a children's theatre than in an adult theatre. The training of an actor for a Theatre for Youth is therefore very serious and thorough. In the Leningrad Children's Theatre, for example, the course lasts four years. Students are accepted from sixteen upwards. The training is entirely free, and many students receive grants. The course includes, besides the usual acting subjects, physical culture and rhythmic movements, child psychology, great dramatists and their work, the history of the theatre, and social science, which is the study of Marxist politics and philosophy. For the first eighteen months the students do not use words in their work. They are laying the foundation of acting through movement, mime, and gesture.

When the students have mastered the elements of movement and mime they begin to work on the spoken word. In the third year they begin practical work by occasionally walking on the stage, and playing very minor parts. In the fourth year the practical work on the stage is increased and they often understudy principals. The training does not end with the completion of the course. Study and practice continue for as long as the actor works in the theatre. As a theatre may have sixty or more actors, they are not acting continuously, which makes study possible. The salary varies slightly with the different theatres and with experience. In the Moscow State Theatre for Youth beginners in 1938 received 250 roubles a month. The

salary rose to 650, and sometimes more. As there is a steady increase in wages, generally with a decrease in cost of living, both the minimum and maximum are probably higher to-day. Actors are paid whether they are playing or not, and they receive a month's holiday with full pay. Should an actress be about to have a baby she will get nine weeks' leave with full pay. Very many of the young actresses I met were mothers.

The young, new actors have to play in twenty-four performances a month, the older ones in eighteen performances. The working day is six hours, which has to include study and rehearsals, and any work above the six hours is paid for extra. There is a continuous change of rôles in the theatre, stars being non-existent. The heroine of to-day may have only two lines to-morrow, but she has to pay as much attention to her two lines as to her big part. The bad practice of "type" playing does not exist. An actor must be able to play all sorts of parts and all sorts of ages. I asked Nikonov, the director of the Moscow Theatre for Youth, what happens if an actor or actress refuses a part. He replied that that was impermissible. Labour discipline in the theatre was very strong. It was quite in order for an actor to go to the director and say that for these and these reasons he finds he is unable to play a particular part. A friendly discussion would settle the matter one way or another, but a direct refusal of a rôle would not be tolerated.

*The Audience* is the reason for the theatre. It will therefore be easily understood that a Theatre for Youth carries on much work with the audience. This work is in the hands of the education section of the theatre. The results of their work are communicated to the actors in the course of their studies and at special meetings and conferences. There is work with the children in the theatre and there is work with the children in the school. The very detailed and minute observation of the audience that used to go on, particularly in the Natalie Satz theatre, where she had investigation carried on into the effect of different emotional stimuli on the sugar content of the body, has long been dropped. The purpose of observation to-day is to find how best to present the type of play considered desirable, and how a play must

be written to present successfully certain ideas and principles with which it is considered communist children should be conversant. I found that this work varied in the different theatres. In some, observers sit amongst the audience and make notes on the reactions to a play. This may be done, as in Leningrad, for ten to fifteen performances of one play. The notes are then written up, the material analysed, and the findings and conclusions presented to the whole theatre personnel. The result may be a change in presentation, in scenery, in lighting, in costume, in acting, or even an alteration in the play itself.

In most of the theatres there are audience clubs. These meet regularly, discuss plays that have been produced, and make suggestions for future productions. The members of the club also carry on propaganda for the theatre among those boys and girls who are not interested. Most of the theatres too have exhibitions of models of sets of different productions. Many members of the clubs will themselves engage in the making of models. Some theatres will organise a small exhibition of material relevant to the new play being produced. These exhibitions are very popular. In the Moscow State Theatre of Youth there was, when I visited it late in 1938, no detailed observation carried on. Instead, in a special place in the auditorium hung a notice, "Here will be found the educationist to answer your questions." On several occasions I saw her surrounded by a group of boys and girls, answering their questions and discussing points with them. From these interviews she gathers material which is helpful for present and future productions.

Much work is done with the school both before and after the production of a new play. The theatre educationist will visit the schools which send their children and discuss the new play with the literature master or mistress. They will then plan the preparatory work, reading and discussing the play, its possible use in the art lesson, and so on. Discussions with the teacher and theatre educationist, written work and art work, are encouraged after the play has been seen. The curriculum in the teachers' training colleges includes a course on the Children's Theatre. Everybody concerned with the Children's Theatre holds that a visit to a play is much more

valuable after preparatory work has been done. They did not find that it staled the interest or took away from the thrill of seeing a play.

There used to be a good deal of organised play, dancing, singing-games, etc., before a performance and in the intervals in the halls which every theatre possesses. To-day most of the organised activity has disappeared. They are coming to the conclusion that to make the children take part in organised activity, even if related to the play, spoils the impression of what they have seen, interferes with the proper reception of what they are yet to see, and often tires them out.

There is one other amenity provided for the young audiences which is greatly appreciated, that is the buffet. In Kiev it is the most delightfully spacious room imaginable. The walls and ceilings are gaily painted with scenes from plays. In the centre is a fountain with goldfish. The tables and chairs are low, to fit the youngsters, as is the buffet-table. I know no place so calculated to teach children social manners. In the interval, which lasts about fifteen minutes, the audience troops out to eat sweets, cakes, and ices. Eating in the auditorium is not really done, and one never sees it in the disgusting state that is the case in other countries.

*The Production.*—A play may take from three to eight months or more to produce. If it is a new play the author will first of all read it to the producers, educationists, and company. This is invariably followed by much discussion, which may result in the play being rewritten. The final version is again read to the theatre for approval. Then begin discussions between the author, director, and the various producers. Each one has to study the play and prepare his contribution. The scenic designer must have drawings and models of the sets, the costume designer designs for the costumes, the choreographer charts of dances and movements, the music director the music. When these are ready they are exhibited to the company. Then follow discussions of the play and the characters, lectures on the period with which the play deals; literature on the period is recommended for reading; museums for visits are indicated. And now begin rehearsals, for speech, for gesture,



for expression, for movement, each with its responsible producer, rehearsals of individual characters, rehearsals of separate scenes. This may take from four to six weeks or longer. Rehearsals on the stage are carried out with the complete scenery and properties, with entrances and exits as they are to appear finally, and with the orchestra. There will be several full rehearsals and then the final dress rehearsal, which is given before an audience of critical youngsters. These send in their criticisms of the performance, which criticisms are seriously studied, so much so that important changes may be made in the final production. The greatest attention is paid to every detail, so that a play in one of the children's theatres can be the most satisfying experience. Some of the loveliest productions that I have seen in the U.S.S.R. have been in these theatres.

*The Repertory* of plays is very wide indeed. Gone are the days when the theatre was considered a vehicle for propaganda. Plays are divided according to age-groups, one type of play being given for those between eight and twelve years and another for those over twelve. For the younger age-group the repertory consists chiefly of Soviet and foreign fairy tales or of dramatised versions of fables. Kouznetsov, the director of the Kiev Children's Theatre, said to me: "To-day we consider it very important to give children plays which will satisfy their need for phantasy, plays which will help to develop their imagination, which will enrich their artistic and emotional life." Fairy tales are of course not limited to the young age-group. Kouznetsov gave *The Blue Bird* for the 12 to 18 age-group, and a very beautiful production it was. The repertory for older boys and girls is naturally more varied. It includes Russian classics, French, German, Spanish, and English classics, modern Soviet plays, and opera. In two weeks in Leningrad I saw *The Snow Maiden*, *The Regimental Band* (a Soviet play), Gogol's *Revisor*, *The Green Bird* (an Italian fairy tale), Ostrovsky's *Our Own People*, *The Hunchback Horse* (a fairy tale), and *Brother and Sister* (a Soviet play). The repertory of the Kiev Theatre for the next eighteen months was *The Blue Bird* (which had taken eight months to produce), *The Hunchback Horse*, *Gorki's Childhood*, *The Youth of Shevchenko*,

*Red Riding Hood*, *Ivassilki Telesnik* (a Ukrainian fairy tale), *Scheherezade*, *Don Quixote*, *William Tell*, *Robin Hood*, *Mowgli*, Gorki's *Guiltless Guilty*, Ostrovsky's *Our Own People*, *The Rifle* (a Soviet play), *Romeo and Juliet* (for boys and girls from fifteen to eighteen), and a new Soviet play, *The Skates*, in praise of honesty. There was also to be a play dealing with international problems, *From the Dog Star*, which shows a group of French astronomers in the Pyrenees refusing to give up a fleeing airman to the Fascists and being driven by discussion and events to become political and anti-Fascist.

I do not know whether this ambitious programme will be achieved, but it gives some idea of the activity of a Children's Theatre. In Kiev the repertory is discussed by the whole theatre personnel, together with representatives from the schools, teachers, and Pioneer Leaders, representatives from children's clubs, and sometimes from parents' councils and patron factories. After adoption by the conference it is submitted to the Commission for Arts for approval. The Kiev repertory shows the Commission to be exceedingly tolerant.

Every Theatre for Youth is linked up with some factory, collective or state-farm or army regiment, and the patronage and visits will be mutual. In the summer, from June to the end of August, the companies visit collective and state farms, industrial settlements, and newly constructed cities, and give the same excellent productions in these remote places as they do in the capitals. The Leningrad Regional Children's Theatre, which I discovered by chance, and which even few Russians seem to know, specialises in playing to hamlets and settlements in the tundra and Arctic Circle. Space only permits me to mention the extraordinarily interesting work of this theatre. I hope some time to be able to accept their invitation to go on one of their tours to the North.

Now a word about Natalie Satz, since she was the person with whom people outside and inside the U.S.S.R. identified the Children's Theatre. It is quite true to say that the Children's Theatre owes a good deal to her initiative, but the debt is not nearly so great as she led people to believe. She had an extraordinary flair for publicity, and succeeded

in making everybody believe that the Children's Theatre in the U.S.S.R. was Natalie Satz. Her work in the early years was very fine, but she did not develop with it. Her very qualities, carried to extreme and persisted in when conditions no longer demanded such qualities, became defects. In the last years her repertory was poor, she relied on her old successes, which had by then lost their quality. *The Negro and the Monkey* is one example of this. When first produced, under the very difficult conditions existing in the country, it was a fine production. When I saw it in 1936 it had long ceased to be that. In fact it was poor, both theatrically and educationally, and yet she would not take the play off. She also became intolerant of criticism. She put on a new play about school life, *Seryozha Streltsov*, which caused much discussion. At the conference at which Professor Arkin, the theatre psychologist, analysed all the material that had been collected as a result of work with the audience, to my surprise she was not present. She should have been removed from her directorship of the theatre long before this was actually done.

I have known the Theatre for Youth for ten years, have seen it grow and develop. It was extraordinarily interesting to see how, during the period when formalism was at its height in the adult theatre, the children's theatre was almost entirely free from it. Only Natalie Satz flirted with it. With a knowledge of children derived from careful and sympathetic observation, those in charge of children's theatres resisted the temptation to experiment with form. Children are realists even in their fantasy. They demand a truthful relation between form and content, and above all they demand a truthful relation between the dramatist's and producer's presentation of life and life itself. Thus in Natalie Satz's production of *Seryozha Streltsov* the audiences, without exception, objected to the author's easy solution to difficulties by making every unsatisfactory character reform. They knew that quick wholesale reformatations are not true. In spite of all the efforts of the producer, ninety-eight per cent. of the spectators who wrote criticisms sympathised with the bad boy and disliked the model boy. Neither the author nor the producer had succeeded in their aim, which was to

show the futility and the unsatisfactoriness of the romanticism of the past for modern Soviet youth, and per contra the thrilling excitement of Soviet life, the absorbing romance of creating a socialist society.

Most of the children's theatres tried to solve their problems first by good plays, and second by good craftsmanship; great sincerity of acting, the complete identification of the actor with his part, great attention to detail, and an economy of design. It is not to be expected that the standard is everywhere consistently high. A young producer will often make mistakes, very often because of his enthusiasm. Through these mistakes he learns and improves. If he should not improve he will be informed that he has mistaken his vocation and that he had better try something else. Repeatedly unsatisfactory work is not tolerated.

In their theatres Soviet youth has a treasure-house whose riches cannot but influence them for good emotionally, artistically, and intellectually.

BEATRICE KING.

## NEW TRENDS IN SOVIET BALLET

THE art of no given period can ignore the fact that every nation has something uniquely its own which persists through all social or economic changes. It is this which gives historical continuity to a nation and which is the distinguishing feature of one nation from another. This bedrock of individuality is, however, definitely influenced by the economic and social conditions under which the people comprising the nation live. Thus though the fundamental spirit may be the same through the centuries, its expression will change more or less, and in time this different expression will give an added new quality to the spirit itself.

Ballet is essentially an art of tradition, traditions which are handed down from master to master. There is evolution but never revolution, and because of this the traditions upon which ballet is based cannot easily be violated.

Since the seventeenth century the history of ballet has been marked by periods of technical development, with pauses during which some dance genius codified previous discoveries and adapted them for use in this art-form. When Peter the Great (1672-1725) decided to westernise Russia he sent certain Russian dancers to the Court of Louis IV to acquire the art of Dance.

The Court having set the example, the Russian nobility followed suit. They formed their own ballet troupes, for which they had their serfs trained. The Russian theatre owes much to the serf actor. Russian Ballet is expressive of the common people, because it had a greater contact with them than in any other country. From time to time different periods absorbed foreign ideas, but Russian Ballet steadily persisted in retaining its own creative artistic force, it never lost its individuality.

After the Revolution the enthusiastic young revolutionaries

who took up the ballet considered that all the old ideals of choreography, based on traditional technique, should be replaced by revolutionary ideas in movement. All the old themes were to be forgotten, all the canons of ballet traditions were to be broken up and new ideas of dance-movement take their place. But with a few exceptions these experiments were found to yield little material advantage. All ballets produced between 1917 and 1930 have gradually dropped out of the repertory of Soviet Ballet. At the same time the classical ballet continued to be given, and *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, and *Giselle* could be seen frequently, so that the classic traditions of the technical brilliance of the Russian dancer were never lost.

All choreographers, dancers, musicians, and artists connected with the Soviet world of ballet hold that a more serious problem lies before them than a continuous revival of old ballets, with merely an enrichment of dance technique and a display of beautiful movements accompanied by appropriate music. Their problem is the creation of a modern ballet performance that will respond to modern artistic trends and that is in keeping with the cultural demands of the enormous Soviet audiences. It is this need to satisfy the masses, to educate the whole 180 million of them, which is shaping the trends of modern Soviet art in general.

In 1938 the Leningrad Choreographic Technicum celebrated the 200th anniversary of its founding, a significant and important event for the future trend of Soviet Ballet. In honour of the occasion, and in keeping with the Soviet's endless researches to discover all the good elements of the past, three books were published dealing with various aspects of the history of Russian Ballet. One of these books gave the biographies of five ballet-masters of the eighteenth century, whose methods are now being analysed and adapted by present-day Soviet choreographers.

These five ballet-masters—Didelot, Perrot, Saint-Leon, Ivan, and Petipa—each in his turn introduced some fresh element into the art of ballet, which present-day choreographers are endeavouring to weld together in their efforts to solve to-day's problems.

Soviet critics of to-day have agreed that the ballerina

dancing on her toes is that æsthetic convention without which the ballet theatre cannot exist. But this does not mean that the production must be built around the virtuosity of a ballerina, nor that the technique of classical dancing and the production of a ballet should remain stagnant. Every dancer is equally important to the production and every dancer must play his or her part. With two hundred years of tradition behind these Soviet dancers, technique has been brought to such perfection that the most minor member of the cast is capable, if necessary, of virtuoso tricks.

How does the Soviet dancer attain such a degree of perfection? The answer is, long training and hard work, for it takes at least ten years to make a dancer. The programme as laid down by the Leningrad Technicum is a most comprehensive one, and nothing essential for the education of a dancer has been omitted. The course has been gradually evolved during the two hundred years of the school's existence.

The pupil begins his or her studies at the age of nine; it is essential to pass a severe medical examination, followed by an examination by a committee of dancers, artists, and musicians on the general suitability of the candidate. It is extremely difficult to get into the Leningrad School and there is always a long waiting list.

During the first seven years of the course the pupil continues his general education, as well as taking the following special subjects: the daily class in Classical Dance, which is always taken by a teacher of the pupil's own sex and which lasts fifty-five minutes; a twice-weekly class of Social Dances, such as polkas, gavottes, minuets, fox-trots, etc., which boys and girls take together. At the age of fourteen this is replaced by classes in Character Dance, during which the pupils study the dances of every nation, but in which most stress is laid on the study of every type of Soviet National Dance.

At the age of sixteen the student begins the study of the Art of Mime, which embraces all the problems of classical mime, conventional gesture, and the more naturalistic modern school, and the study of miming as a soloist and as a member of a group, which takes the form of a study of various rôles in the Soviet Ballet repertory.



Following this seven years' course comes the final three years' course of "Perfection." The student is now able to specialise more in the particular branch of dance for which he or she is most fitted. There are courses for the study of Classical Adagio or Supported Work, the study of the famous rôles in classical and modern ballets, as well as make-up and other kindred subjects.

Over and above these dancing subjects, which are essential for every dancer, every pupil, from the first day in the school, attends lessons in French, the history of art, literature, music, and of dances of the world. Every pupil is encouraged to study some musical instrument or other, and much time is given to this, as a full understanding of musical problems is necessary for every dancer.

With such a background it becomes obvious that the Soviet Union intends to keep in step with all modern revolutionary processes in art. In what manner, then, does the art of Soviet Ballet tend to progress?

In its pursuit of art the Soviet Union—so that it may recover that primal ecstasy which is the secret of all art—has decided to weed out the century-old traditions which have hindered its functioning and explore the real origins of art, as they exist in its folk-lore.

From time immemorial, in all parts of Russia, every man, woman, and child has taken part in some form of dance ritual devised to celebrate one occasion or another. The wealth of movement displayed in these primitive, yet sometimes highly complicated, dances has been seized upon to lend verisimilitude, and as a likely solution to the ever-increasing demand by the people for ballet. Experiments in producing ballets based on national dances are continually being made. (An experiment was first tried by Saint-Leon about 1815–1870, who produced the first Russian ballet, *The Hump-Backed Horse*, founded on Russian themes, which contained national dances and is still retained in the Soviet repertory.)

Individual dances, however, are not the complete solution: "Ballet must have a plot" (Ballet-master Didelot, 1767–1837); "it must be replete with dramatic action and offer itself as a realistic reflection of life" (Ballet-master Perrot, 1810–1892).



The first Soviet ballet experiment to embody these elements was *The Flames of Paris*, a story of the French Revolution (1798). It was based on traditional French dances, with their fiery temperament and mass-effects, and was set to music typical of the peasant and artisan songs, which were contrasted with scenes of the languor and gentility of the noble Court dances of Louis XVI.

Following this came *The Fountains of Bakhchissarai*, based on Pushkin's poem, a study in the portrayal of deep human passion, as outlined by Didelot, utilising the lyrical dances of Southern Russia, the languorous Persian dances, and the still wilder Tatar dances.

The next ballet to follow this new trend was *The Prisoner in the Caucasus*, a revival of the early nineteenth-century production by Didelot, whose version of Pushkin's famous poem differed greatly from the original theme. That change can be explained as being due to Didelot's incomprehension of the Russian language, thus having to rely on a translation by the Court Censor, who functioned during the period when Pushkin was in exile.

The scene of this ballet is laid principally in the Caucasus, so that the choreographer was able to utilise the great wealth of the Hill-Folk's dances, but they were introduced only as an accompaniment to the theme. These dances were interposed, as in Didelot's days, to give local colour, to intensify the dramatic effect of the meeting of the Prisoner and the Circassian Maid, her betrothal, the Hill-Folk's feats, their preparation for battle and subsequent fights. It was still found necessary to use those traditional mime scenes, in order that the actors should be able to convey the story to the audience by their gestures. The same conventional gestures were used in such ballets as Petipa's *The Sleeping Beauty* and Saint-Leon's *The Hump-Backed Horse*.

Critics agreed that these ballets were steps in the right direction, but it was necessary to make further research into the practice of the old masters, as well as into folk-legends, dances, music, and culture.

At last a wholly new ballet was produced, *The Heart of the Hills*, which is based in its entirety on the traditional music, theme, dance, and decor of Georgian and allied nationalities.

The success of this ballet was due largely to the score of a young composer, André Balanchivaidze, who had studied and utilised Georgian folk-music for his background. He was most successful in the lyrical and dramatic episodes of the theme. The music has a dynamic quality which gives much scope to the fantasy of the choreographer, Chaboukiani. It is these two artists who are mainly responsible for the unique character of this ballet.

Chaboukiani, the choreographer of *The Heart of the Hills*, is himself a brilliant classical dancer, one of the finest in the Union. He believes in the rich expressive ways of the classical dance, and by introducing into his development of the libretto deep emotionalism and fiery temperament, he has succeeded in convincing the audience of its sincerity.

Daringly he has dispensed with the purely mimed episodes, as formerly used by choreographers, and turned these episodes into original dances, the emotional reality of which does not call for conventional mimed gestures. To do this he made use of the centuries-old traditional mimed Georgian dances.

Critics and *régisseurs* have rarely tackled the problem: "Can we combine ballet conventions with ethnographical reproductions of folk-dance?" Whoever puts this question finds himself in a quandary. Most frequently the alleged folk-dance in a choreographic spectacle becomes simply a pale imitation of the real thing, a *divertissement*, instead of a creative adaptation of the original folk-dance. This was the case in such ballets as *The Prisoner in the Caucasus*, in which, although the dances were much more realistic and authentic than in Petipa's productions, their dramatic function had not been changed. It was still necessary to use purely mimed episodes to convey the meaning of the story.

In *The Heart of the Hills* Chaboukiani enriched the movement of the Georgian dance with the technique of the classical dance and "*les pointes*," in his effort to develop and enhance their theatricality. In such an approach to folk-dance, classical ballet and the people's choreographic art mutually enrich one another, and this happens to be the first ballet in the history of Georgian choreography which convincingly demonstrates the accuracy of such a method. After all, for centuries men have danced "*sur les pointes*" in a "*lezginka*"

and other dances. Why should not the women in a neighbouring state do the same? In the last analysis, classical dance is not so far removed from folk-dance, and indeed was originally based on it.

Last year Chaboukiani produced yet another ballet, *Laurencia*, which he based on Lope de Vega's tragedy *Fuente Ovejuna*, making much use of Spanish dance. It presented the choreographer with a most difficult problem: how to create a performance founded on primitive, dramatic material which would not only gladden the eyes with its wealth of colour but, what is more important, would stimulate thought and feeling and convey the patriotism and optimism of the Spanish people in their fight for freedom.

Once again ballet based on ethnographical material achieved success. The secret of the triumph of Chaboukiani's ballets lies in their strength and reality, and pre-eminently in the character of their dances. To Chaboukiani, dance is the principal factor, and it looks as though he has revenged himself on that period when ballet, as in Petipa's days, was brought to the level of a lifeless, rhythmical pantomime. He spares neither strength nor fantasy to present the content of the ballet-play in a language full of imagery and colour.

Throughout the entire performance dance reigns supreme, now passionate folk-dance, now intricate classical duets, quartettes, then mass dances and solo variations. Skilfully and cleverly he draws out of the classical traditions everything that is of permanent value in art and combines the old technique with the new ethnographical discoveries, thus enlivening classical dance with the living essence of folk-art.

All the participants in these ballets enter enthusiastically into the necessary research and preparations, with the result that the *corps de ballet*, which in old ballet served only as a decorative background to the soloists, now plays an individual and at times even a leading part. The ballet-master nowadays does not deprive the mass of their personality; in a masterly fashion Chaboukiani sets off the individuality of every performer, constantly merging the artistic possibilities of the dancer with his own ideas.

All this preoccupation with ethnographical and historical research will, I am convinced, help to solve the æsthetic

problems of ballet in Russia, and prove that the future of Soviet Ballet lies in a closer attention to the wealth of folk-dance and music, which forms the warp and woof of daily life in the Soviet Union.

JOAN LAWSON.

*Editors' Note*

It is important to emphasise the Soviet attitude to ballet as to all the arts, that it is an art whose enjoyment must be within reach of the whole nation, that means within reach of all the formerly oppressed and backward nationalities. But the policy is not to impose Russian art on non-Russian peoples, but to help them to express their own individuality—to create their own art out of their own past and present experiences.

To make this practicable the Moscow Choreographic School has a Department for Nationalities, which trains native ballet dancers from Kazakhstan, from Buryato-Mongolia, from Uzbekistan, from Tataria, etc. There are also National Studios, and a special Education Department which trains teachers for these nationalities. Their course includes such subjects as education, psychology, anatomy, and physiology, the teaching methods, as well as dance history and practice.

The Scientific Research Department sends out expeditions for the study and collection of folk-dances in the remotest districts, all of which contribute to the development of a native art of ballet. An immediate result of the researches of the past years is to be a comprehensive encyclopædia of the different kinds of folk-dances in the U.S.S.R.

## SOVIET OPERA

**A**N article on Soviet Opera must necessarily begin by emphasising the distinction between the significance of the term "opera" in the U.S.S.R. and elsewhere. In the former case it includes consideration not only of the musical composition as a "work of art," but also of all matters concerned with the livelihood of the workers in the sphere of opera—composers, producers, conductors, singers, players, scenic artists, stage staff, and so on, and likewise the whole question of the development of operatic culture among the masses of the people.

Opera in the U.S.S.R. is one, and an important one, of the many rights every citizen may enjoy, if he will.

Mr and Mrs Sidney Webb have summarised the Soviet Constitution in the form of a new Declaration of the Rights of Man. Among these "Twelve Tables of the Law" we read:

"II. The Right to leisure, by statutory limitation of the hours of employment," and to "all means of happily using the leisure so ensured."

Access to the treasure-house of operatic literature and music in Western Europe is limited to those who are in a position to afford the price of admission, and however much this may be reduced by means of subsidies, public or private, it excludes the mass of the people. In the U.S.S.R. the enjoyment of opera, as of every cultural advantage, is the full prerogative of every citizen—*i.e.* every worker—as part return for his productive contribution to the community.

The vast throng that crowds every performance in the opera-houses, great and small, of the Soviet Union proves how eagerly the opportunity is taken advantage of. And not only there, but in those factories, collective-farms, organisations, and Red Army centres which have theatres of their

own, and they are very many, operas and scenes from operas are constantly being produced, either by the workers themselves or with the collaboration of professional artists from the big theatres. And, as an operatic enthusiast, one of my most moving recollections is of a children's matinée of Rimsky-Korsakov's fairy opera *Tsar Sultan* in the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre. The house was crowded with thousands of these youngsters—there seemed to be two or three swarming on every seat—who in the *entr'actes* swept down like a wave to gaze into the orchestra pit whence the musical enchantment had just come.

No doubt tradition counts for something in this passion of the public of the U.S.S.R. for opera. It is a fact that in the Russian Republics, as in some other European countries, the form in which the majority of people take their musical pleasure is through the medium of opera. But beyond this there also exists the magnificent body of works by the great Russian composers of the past and a superb school of singers and producers who realised them. The point is, that these treasures of musical-theatrical art have not only been preserved for a few but have been made available to a vast public, covering the entire population, while the appropriate organs of the Soviet Government have embarked upon schemes providing for a colossal expansion, the limits of which are at present unpredictable.

Under the Tsarist regime, opera was limited to the two capitals and a very few of the largest towns. The Imperial Theatres were under the jurisdiction of the Court officials, and there were, especially in Moscow, a few private theatres, subsidised by wealthy magnates, in which productions of a more "advanced" type were essayed. The poverty of life and its oppressive conditions completely removed opera from the reach of the masses, and it did not occur to the authorities that it should be otherwise.

Since the Revolution, and with the stabilisation of the Soviet Government, the rapid development of all aspects of culture has been systematically taken in hand. The successive Five-Year Plans have provided increasing material resources for their support. With the formation of the Union of Soviet Composers the questions relating to the

theoretical side of operatic composition and production have been more and more seriously scrutinised.

Great as have been the successes under both these heads, perhaps the most spectacular success has been the creation of operatic establishments in the Autonomous Republics of the U.S.S.R. The Soviet policy of political liberation for the many nationalities that formed the old Russian Empire had its parallel in the cultural field. Peoples that were not permitted even the use of their own language have had their national literature and their national music restored to them. Freedom of education has transformed these races of the steppes and mountain fastnesses into progressive communities, sharing the possibilities of cultural development which were formerly only at the disposal of the most advanced countries.

In the sphere of music this policy was developed on two converging lines. Firstly, a number of young composers were sent on missions to these remote regions in order to study their musical resources. Lyov Knipper and Boris Shechter, to mention two outstanding cases, used the materials so discovered for creating brilliant orchestral suites based on the music of Tadzikstan and Turkmenia. The veteran master Reinhold Glière has written numerous operas founded on the folk-lore of different republics of the U.S.S.R.: *Zaporozhsti* (Ukraine), *Shah Senem* (Azerbaijan). Simultaneously, the unusual life of the nations themselves have been stimulated to the achievement of an amazingly rapid development. Theatres have been established in the capitals, and many of these new republics now have an indigenous repertory provided by native composers, both of opera and ballet. Based on the songs and dances of the people, with stories drawn from their national epics, these grew in the few years since their liberation from simple displays to dramatic spectacles, and are at present blossoming into operas and ballets which are the admiration of their Western colleagues.

To return to Moscow and Leningrad, to which in any case my personal experience is restricted.

A visit in May 1939 found, as is usual after a short interval in that country of vertiginous transformations, the whole operatic picture radically altered. The previous period had



seen *Ekaterina Ismailova*, the Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District, as the high light of contemporary Soviet Opera. This opera, known to English listeners from a broadcast performance by the B.B.C. in the spring of 1936, gives a horrifying picture of events in the household of a provincial merchant in nineteenth-century Russia. It portrays vividly the faithlessness, the lust, and the cruelty, even to murder, which frequently characterised the personal relationship of the wealthy provincial Russians before the Revolution. The work, despite its sordid subject (true enough as an historical picture), showed the young master Dimitri Shostakovitch at the height of his powers as a dramatic composer. But it was severely criticised, not only on account of the irrelevance of its theme to the trend and objectives of life in Soviet society, but because the musical style made it remote from the mass of the people. An art that is entirely incomprehensible to the mass of the people, for whom art should exist, is valueless. The people cannot be educated to art through a form which does not touch them at any point. The opera was withdrawn. The famous discussion about the opera, in which not only musicians but also the mass of the people took part, marks the first occasion on which the question of "what the public wants" was tested in practice, in a socially self-conscious community. It was not said that Shostakovitch was a "bad" musician, but that he had not understood the rôle of the artist in a socialist society. To-day his fame stands higher than ever as the most brilliantly gifted composer of his generation. Like the other artists he gave up his pursuit of the complex and the unusual. Thus a new "line" was evolved.

What this is was clearly shown in the three new operas that momentarily dominate the repertory in the U.S.S.R.: *Quiet Flows the Don* and *Virgin Soil Upturned* by Ivan Dzerzhinsky, and *The Mother* by Valerian Zhelobinsky. Both these composers are a decade younger than Shostakovitch, and nothing could more vividly express the contrast between conditions in the U.S.S.R. and, for instance, England than the easy naturalness with which the coming young men are looked to to provide the answer to current problems.

What underlies the present policy in regard to opera



becomes clear from an examination of the three works mentioned above. In the first place the libretto of each is taken from one of the best-selling Soviet novels of the day. As the sales of these run into millions, and the stories have been both filmed and dramatised, it stands to reason that every detail of characters and events is known in advance to the multitude of potential opera-goers. The characters and plot are presented on very broad lines of contrast as between good and evil. This simplification, which to Western eyes appears as an over-simplification, is in fact *true* in the present life of the Soviet Union. The heroic efforts of the people in Sholokhov's novels to establish their collective-farm, and the struggle against the traitorous opponents and their final overthrow, is in fact the very marrow of existence for millions of people in the Soviet Union to-day.

*Quiet Flows the Don* shows how in the impact of great events like war and revolution, human beings are affected, how the petty but vital personal preoccupations gradually give place to the great national enthusiasm, how a thoughtless, careless individualist becomes a zealous supporter of this new life opening up.

*Virgin Soil Upturned* depicts the struggle of Davidov, Secretary of the Communist Cell, to carry through the collectivisation of a farm, in which he succeeds after many failures.

In 1933 Dzerzhinsky, who is a brilliant pianist, had written two concertos for the piano, works full of talent and youthful attractiveness, and was composing *Quiet Flows the Don*. He could hardly have foreseen at that time that his first stage-work would be raised to the position of "opera type" of a new movement. A comparison of this work with its successor shows a considerable growth of self-consciousness in the interval. The youthful naïveté of the earlier work, its unsophisticated melodiousness, and sincere feeling of actuality in the dramatic unfolding of the story had doubtless much to do with its success, as had the vigour and effectiveness of the choral writing. On the other hand, the lyrical parts for solo voices in *Virgin Soil Upturned* show a considerable advance in dramatic power and characterisation. Once again the choruses are outstanding features,

and the "Cossack Song" of the finale is a "best-seller" hummed and whistled by millions in Moscow to-day. Both finales, in fact, are of the kind of "mass song," which is one of the most remarkable types of "art forms" that has been invented in the U.S.S.R. in recent years, and of which certain composers, such as Dounayevsky, have become almost specialists.

Valerian Zhelobinsky had already written two operas, *Komarinsky Mouzhik* and *Imeniny* (*The Birthday*), before gaining, at the age of twenty-eight, his greatest success with *The Mother*. *Komarinsky Mouzhik*, produced in Leningrad in 1933, is a grand historical subject, dealing with the revolt of the peasants under Ivan Bolotnikov in the troubled times after the death of Boris Godounov. It revealed a remarkable theatrical talent in the main dramatic moments, and an even greater sense of musical parody in treating characters like priests and boyars, as well as fine choruses.

*The Mother* is taken from Maxim Gorki's famous classic of revolutionary activity of the working class under the Tsarist regime. The struggle of men and women alike against harsh conditions imposed by their masters in industry, against spies and provocateurs; their invincible devotion in carrying on propaganda for "the truth" even to the point where the mother sacrifices herself in the cause after her son's arrest—these are heroic memories for the Soviet public to-day.

The outlines of these three libretti show that when the Soviet spectator sees a modern opera he is in immediate touch with the dramatic situation. In the men and women on the stage he sees himself, and the events on the stage are known to him from his own life in the present or recent past. The treatment of the work is realistic and concrete, and his attention is fixed all the time on the dramatic action and its development. The theatrical representation of events is thus not something remote; on the contrary, these things are happening to him, and accordingly he feels the situation directly, both in its effects on him as an individual and in its social significance. The dramatic action is "the thing" (as some theorists have maintained should be the case), and the music serves the purpose of heightening and

illuminating the emotional effect. It is not therefore tragic if the music in the case of these young composers should appear, as it were, in the background of the action. They are fulfilling the all-important purpose of bringing opera into touch with the mass of the people, with far-reaching consequences for the future.

In the last three years twenty-five new operas have been produced in the Soviet Union. Naturally not all of them proved successful, but a number of them were. *In the Storm*, Khrennikov's new opera, has just been brought out simultaneously in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and Saratov. The number successful serves to show that what is being done is unparalleled in any other country. And all this is just the beginning; quantity will generate quality, as the critical faculty of the masses is sharpened.

Standards constantly rise as efforts become better coordinated. Recently, there has been a great movement to raise the level of criticism. Arising out of an article by Fadeyev in *Pravda* last April, artists all over the Union have held conferences to discuss how this can be achieved. There was a general feeling that in many cases praise had been far too indiscriminate. It was agreed that only the most serious consideration of important artistic problems was adequate to the tasks that were being undertaken, and that this serious consideration was useful both to artists and public.

In conclusion, something must be added regarding the performances of opera in Moscow at the present time. Here also several great changes have occurred during the last three years. Firstly, there has been the death of Stanislavsky. In 1925 this genius of stage producers was offered the direction of the Bolshoi Theatre, as it was felt that he would be the one man capable of realising the musician's dream of artistic production of opera. He did not accept, but opened his opera studio in the Tverskaya, in which with younger artists he worked out his productions of many of the most famous masterpieces. These miracles of truth and beauty were slowly evolved out of the depths of the personality of the characters, and conceived in a setting that caused each figure to live in time and space according to his or her nature. *Yevgeny Onegin*, *Boris Godounov*,

*Carmen*, *Figaro*, *King Dodon*—no spectator who has seen these productions will ever think of them otherwise than as he saw them here. And it has to be realised that all this took place on a stage where there was “no room for anything,” and that, for example, the whole setting of *Yevgeny Onegin* was built round the pair of columns in the rooms where they rehearsed. The old house has now gone, and so has its presiding genius, but his inspiration will remain.

A few years ago the operatic situation in Leningrad and Moscow resembled that of many places where there were “State Theatres.” They pursued traditional methods, while the best productions came from the smaller theatres and experimental “studios.” To-day this is altered, owing to a particular circumstance. In the northern capital, the Little Opera Theatre was under the musical direction of a man of outstanding ability and perception, S. S. Samosoud. It was this theatre that saw the first production of the outstanding works by the best young composers—Shostakovitch, Dzerzhinsky, Zhelobinsky. For the past three years Samosoud has been in charge of the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre (in fact it was during the “Gastspiel” of this company in 1936 that Moscow “discovered” him). During this period he has raised the artistic level of his new charge to the greatest of heights.

Such achievements as the recent productions of *Ivan Sussanin* and *Virgin Soil Upturned* could not be seen in any other country. With casts of a brilliance inconceivable elsewhere, every resource of splendid decoration and production, a superb orchestra playing to perfection, and the whole co-ordinated towards the realisation of the dramatic situation, these performances are unsurpassable anywhere in the world. One can only compare this new regime of Samosoud with those of Mahler at the Vienna Hofoper and Toscanini at the Scala, Milan.

Thus, with valuable experience gained in the recent past and a clearer realisation of what Soviet culture requires from the operatic field, there must infallibly be new triumphs to be gained in the immediate future.

EDWARD CLARK.

## MUSICAL EDUCATION

**I**N the U.S.S.R. the appreciation and practice of music is the right of every citizen, and it is a right that Soviet citizens are definitely encouraged to exploit. Musical appreciation, and musical practice where possible, are considered to be essential ingredients in the make-up of every cultured person. And the conditions are present which make it possible and easy to have a musically cultured nation.

Musical education, like general education, is the business of the State, and is entirely free. In music technicums and conservatoires students receive grants which vary according to local conditions.

Conservatoires and privately owned Schools of Music existed in pre-revolutionary Russia; music schools as they are found to-day are entirely a Soviet creation. There have been music circles in the ordinary schools since the beginning of the Soviet regime, and in children's and adults' clubs from the moment of their organisation. Music technicums, too, were soon organised for gifted boys and girls of fifteen years or so. The national Olympiads of children's amateur activities discovered a great many musically gifted children who, given the opportunity, would obviously become first-rate musicians. It was after one of these Olympiads that the decision was taken to organise music schools for children from the age of six to eight, where they would receive the full ordinary education and the musical training for the development of their gifts. The number of these schools increases yearly. In 1939, 34 new Seven-Year Music Schools (from eight to fifteen years) were opened in various cities in the Union. Intermediate musical education is given in the music technicums and studios, and higher musical education in the Conservatoires of Music. In the last few years Conservatoires have been established in the Ukraine, Byelo-

russia, Azerbaidzhan, Georgia, Armenia, and Uzbekistan. According to figures for 1939 there were in the U.S.S.R. 300 Seven-Year Music Schools with 62,000 pupils, 103 music technicums with 19,830 pupils, and 12 Conservatoires with 3690 students. To these should be added the countless courses, schools, and studios organised by industrial enterprises, in Palaces of Culture, and in the Red Army and Navy units. The present annual expenditure of the Soviet Government on music is 25,350,000 roubles; on music schools 55 million roubles; on music technicums and on conservatoires over 30 million roubles.

The musical education of Soviet children begins long before school age. In the crèche and nursery-infant schools, and in the children's sections of workers' clubs, music plays a great part. There are special music broadcasts for these young children. Thus when they enter a music school the ground has already been well prepared.

Admission is contingent on passing a test for ear, rhythm, and musical memory. Any parent or guardian can take a child for a test. The first year in the school is spent in a preparatory class, where the teacher discovers the child's particular aptitude. In general education, the ordinary school curriculum, including the sciences and a foreign language as well as sport, is followed. Soviet authorities are opposed to the belief that an artist must be a peculiar kind of person, that he is absolved from the generally accepted mode of behaviour. That is why there are no "Wunderkinder" in the U.S.S.R., only normal, healthy children gifted in music.

Several towns have Ten-Year Schools, where education is carried on till eighteen, attached to the Conservatoires. At the end of the Seven-Year Course there is a sorting-out. Those pupils whose ability is not outstanding are sent to technicums where they can train for other professions, engineering, medicine, aviation, etc., their general education having given them the necessary preparation. The pupils who pass the test enter a music technicum, while those from the Ten-Year School enter the Conservatoire.

In music technicums the course lasts five years for pianists, violinists, 'cellists, vocalists, and opera-singers, for all others

it is four years. A music technicum has the following departments: pianoforte, string instruments, choral, educational, national instruments, and the history and theory of music.

At the completion of the course students can either begin work as executants, teachers, musical directors of children's and adults' clubs, etc., or they can go on to the Conservatoire for further study.

Many of the students will go out to distant state and collective farms, theatres, or to far-off workers' settlements, and thus carry musical education to every corner of the Union. The music technicums of Tadzhikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenia, etc., where there are as yet no Conservatoires, are doing important work for musical education in these localities.

The Conservatoires are usually big institutions which include all three stages of musical education: the music school, the music technicum, and the higher musical education of the Conservatoire.

Students are accepted between the ages of seventeen to thirty, and are entered for one of the following faculties: pianoforte and organ, string and wind instruments, vocal, composition, history and theory, teaching and conducting. The course lasts five years, and a student may be trained as an executant, a composer, an historian and theoretician, or an instructor for the musical education of children and mass amateur musical activities. Each faculty includes a number of related subjects.

Teaching methods are very varied and there is continual effort for their improvement. Musical education is directly related to the life of the community. Practical work is held to be very important.

In the fourth year instrumental students have teaching practice in the music schools; each student has two children as pupils. Twice a month there is a consultation between student, pupils, and instructor in music-teaching. Students in the teaching faculty have their practice in the ordinary schools, vocal students obtain their practice as leaders of amateur music circles in clubs. There is a State examination at the end of the course and every student, in order to graduate, has to submit a thesis or piece of original work. Six months before the final examination the central Commission of Arts



proposes an appointment to each student, which may be accepted or rejected.

The Conservatoire has a post-graduate course to which students who have shown particular ability in pedagogical research or execution are admitted. At the end of the course the post-graduate worker has to submit a thesis, upon the acceptance of which the title of Master of Musicology is conferred.

The Moscow Conservatoire has also a scientific department for research work, and a department for the music of the nationalities of the U.S.S.R. It has already collected much interesting material on folk-music, and it is continuing to send out expeditions for research into the remote and formerly primitive districts, as for example to the Evenki and Chukchi tribes of the Far North.

Two national departments, the Bashkirian and Kazakhstan, and three national studios, the Turkmen, Uzbek, and Tatar, have been organised by the Conservatoire. These departments and studios train musicians for work in their native autonomous republics.

All students at the Conservatoire receive maintenance grants—the education, we must remember, is free—ranging from 140 to 210 roubles a month, free meals in the Conservatoire dining-room, free medical service, and passes to sanatoria and holiday homes. Students coming from a distance receive free hostel accommodation.

An interesting feature of student life is the partiality for sport: skiing, skating, swimming, volley-ball, football, and tennis. The mountaineering club of the Moscow Conservatoire has already many achievements to its credit.

But the most striking thing to the musician in other countries is the fact that every music student in the U.S.S.R. is assured, six months before his course is completed, of a secure livelihood, and is thus enabled to develop his faculties to their fullest extent without the shadow of uncertainty and insecurity which hangs over all but a very small proportion of musicians in all the other countries of the world.

ALAN BUSH.



## NOTES AND NEWS

### THEATRE NOTES

#### *Nemirovich-Danchenko: A Short Appreciation*

LAST December there was celebrated in the Soviet capital, and in every city where the theatre flourishes, the eightieth birthday of the great producer, V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko. It is curious that he should be so little known abroad, for his contribution to the Russian and Soviet theatre is hardly less than that of Stanislavsky. His contribution was not only that of a producer, but of author and playwright as well.

Born in the Caucasus, he followed the usual path of the well-to-do Russians: first High School, in Tiflis, and then the University, in Moscow. It was while still a student that he began to write—articles, stories, and dramatic reviews. His passion for the theatre, which he showed very early, led him into amateur dramatics during his student days.

At the age of twenty-three the Maly Theatre presented his first play, *Sweet Briar*. His comedy, *The Last Will*, produced in 1888, had an instantaneous success. There followed a number of plays, all dealing with life among wealthy Russian society, showing the destruction of family life, the dissolution of the moral foundations of life, the disappearance of ethical standards, and the effect of all these on the individual. He was a forerunner of Chekhov in his delineation of individuals on the stage. During this period he came into close contact with the actors of the nineteenth century, among whom was a strong tradition of realism.

Nemirovich-Danchenko studied the actors and their art. Not content to remain a student he turned his attention to the teaching of stagecraft. He became an instructor in the

Moscow Philharmonic School, where he stimulated and inspired his pupils with his intellectual breadth and integrity, with his subtlety in the analysis of characters. He surprised his students by demanding from an actor simplicity, depth, and integrity in his performance.

The more he worked with the existing theatre the more dissatisfied he became with it, feeling more and more strongly that it was unable to express the new social ideas which he and the democratic intellectuals, to whom he belonged, cherished. There was nothing for it but to create a new theatre, with new plays and new acting methods. He decided to establish a popular art theatre, and together with Stanislavsky organised it in 1898. At once his qualities as organiser, teacher, and producer became evident. He gave up the rôle of critic and playwright, and devoted himself entirely to theatrical activities. He opened his doors to the new drama, welcomed Chekhov and Gorki as his playwrights, presented Ibsen, and succeeded in creating a rich repertory of vital plays. He and Stanislavsky together re-created the art of acting, changed its whole conception. "Stars" were abolished. Every part was a star part. Nemirovich-Danchenko all the while dreamed of a new type of actor, one who would unite great craftsmanship and artistry with simplicity, with a knowledge of life, and with a high standard of general culture. Between them the two great producers created the new actor, "the Art Theatre actor," who influenced all the following generations of Russian actors and many actors abroad.

Nemirovich-Danchenko made demands on his audience too. He expected, and in time obtained from them, a strict attention to the play. He tolerated no other reason for coming to the theatre except that of desiring to see a play.

The productions of Chekhov's plays in collaboration with Stanislavsky became world-famous. Shakespeare, Dostoyesky, and Ostrovsky he produced equally brilliantly alone.

The Soviet Revolution brought Nemirovich-Danchenko increased scope for his abilities. He had now an unlimited audience who would appreciate his work. The Government supported him fully, and placed every facility at his disposal,

for his work in the Art Theatre, as well as in the Moscow Musical Theatre which he founded. Soviet life gave him new vigour, and those who have seen any of his productions, such as Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, Ostrovsky's *Storm*, or Gorky's *The Enemies* or *Yegor Boulychev*, have acquired a vision of what the theatre should be. In the Moscow Musical Theatre he presents a variety of classical and Soviet operas. He insists that operatic singers must be actors, and in fact calls them singing actors. The music must serve as an aid to greater expression, to more intense living on the stage.

The Soviet Government values the work of the great theatre master very highly. It has conferred on him the country's highest honours.

### *The Moscow Theatre of Folk-Art*

Many visitors to the U.S.S.R. in the early years will remember "The Blue Blouses," amateur groups from factory, from state- and collective-farm, and from the different nationalities. "The Blue Blouses" have ceased to exist, but amateur dramatic activity flourishes more strongly than ever. The Government realises the importance to the cultural development of the community of this widespread spontaneous people's art and has marked its recognition by establishing in Moscow a very fine Theatre for Folk-Art. The Theatre has no permanent company. Amateur groups bring their productions here, and their standard is so high that this theatre has become one of the most popular in Moscow. The plays given are often co-operatively written, and deal with past or present events in the lives of the ordinary people, generally the peasant. They embody the folk-music and folk-dances of the district. This is the case even in a play given by the amateur circle in a factory. It must not be forgotten that to-day's factory worker was yesterday's peasant, and peasant songs and peasant dances are nearer to him than the city's sophistications. In fact, one result of the establishment of this theatre has been a great revival and development of national folk-art. The production of *Old Times of Gdov*, a district in the Leningrad region, describing events in its past history, has stimulated other districts

and villages to create plays around their history. For *Old Times of Gdov* a village teacher collected the old songs and dances. Together with the future cast, she wrote the play. All the parts were taken by members of the collective-farm; two of the most able were the seventy-year-old watchman and the sixty-four-year-old stable-groom.

### *The Kalmyk Theatre of Drama*

For the first time in the history of Kalmykia a Kalmyk National Theatre of Drama was founded there three years ago. Since then, this theatre has given 350 performances, which were attended by 70,000 spectators. The theatre has shown *A Physician in Spite of Himself* and *Sganarelle* by Molière, *Storm* by Ostrovosky, *Enemies* by Gorky, *Love and Intrigue* by Schiller, *Lyubov Yarovaya* by Trenev, and *Insurrection* by Fourmanov. This year's repertory includes Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* and Voitekhov and Lench's *Pavel Grekov*.

During the summer of 1939 the theatre made its first tour through the villages of the Republic, when it gave twenty very successful concerts, as well as plays.

### *The Moscow Central Theatre of the Red Army*

The Red Army is not only a military institution, it is also an educational institution in the widest sense. It gives the same facilities for cultural development to its soldiers as the country gives to the civil population. One of the most popular forms of culture with the army is the theatre, and theatres exist in all military districts, where professional theatre directors work with amateur groups. The oldest of these theatres is in Moscow, now housed in a magnificent new building.

The plays performed naturally deal with subjects of vital interest to the actors—the soldiers—defence, the heroic periods of the past and of the revolution. The Central Theatre during its ten years of existence has visited nearly every military district and every fleet in the Union, always giving productions of a very high standard, of whatever type

they were. The Theatre's travels have helped them to know and to understand the different peoples of the Union, and this knowledge and understanding has enriched their productions.

But the Red Army does not limit its repertory to Soviet themes. Shakespeare, Gorky, Ostrovsky are to be seen on its stage, and now, with its new building, it is planning a great development of theatrical activities.

### *The State Institute of Theatrical Art*

The astonishing development of the theatre in what were formerly primitively backward peoples owes much to the State Institute of Theatrical Art in Moscow, which has different departments for the training of national producers, actors, scenic designers, etc. Every type of features may be met here. From the former desert lands of Kara-Kalpak, from cotton-growing Turkmenistan, from the hills of Checheno-Ingoushetia, from Tadzhikistan, from Kirghizia, from Kalmykia, and from many others, youth is sent to learn the art of acting. During a stay of four years in this many-tongued community they not only learn the art of acting but the art of teaching too, and the love for the theatre with which they came develops into an understanding of the greatness of the theatre. Without exception they return to their native lands and share the treasures they have been given with their own people.

Among the students there are already some whose names will become famous, who show an understanding of their art that is truly astonishing.

It was entirely through the Institute that Kara-Kalpakia opened its first National Theatre in 1939, for the whole of the theatre personnel was trained there. B. K.

### MUSICAL NOTES

**D**IMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH, born 25th September 1906, is the most brilliant of the composers the Soviet Union has produced. He has written operas, ballets, symphonies, concertos, and a large quantity of music for the theatre and

cinema, as well as songs and works for piano. He is the author of six symphonies, the most recent of which was produced in Moscow last November.

In the year of revolutions, 1917, Shostakovich was eleven years old, and his first symphony (Op. 10), written in 1924, undoubtedly reflects the experiences of a boy in those tremendous events and the aspirations to which they gave rise. With this work Shostakovich at one blow conquered the musical audiences of all countries. His second (1927) and third (1929) symphonies are dedicated respectively "To October" and "To the First of May."

In 1936 the discussion of the stylistic problems raised by the opera *The Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (1930-1932) and its withdrawal from the repertoire shook the musical world. The public disapproval compelled him to give up his search after effect for its own sake, to drop the pursuit of unusual forms and to concentrate on depth of content and directness of expression. He has returned to the deeper sources of inspiration that characterised his first symphony.

ARAM KHACHATOURIAN is a notable product of that intense culture that has been gained as a result of the October Revolution by the nationalities of the Autonomous Republics of the Soviet Union. He was born in Tbilisi (Tiflis) in 1904. His father was a bookbinder. Originally a pupil of Gnossin, he entered the Moscow Conservatoire, where he studied with Myaskovsky. The production of his symphony in 1934 at once drew attention to his outstanding talent. His chief subsequent works are the piano concerto (1936) the *Song to Stalin*, for chorus and orchestra (1938), and the ballet *Happiness* (1939). In his works Khachaturian freely utilises material based on the national characteristics of Georgian, Azerbaidzhan, and Armenian folk-music.

NICOLAI MYASKOVSKY is one of the outstanding symphonic composers of our day and of all countries. His fertility in this genre alone is remarkable (his symphonies already number nineteen), and he continues to express himself in this form with a freedom and variety that recall the palmy days of Haydn and Mozart.

His father was a military engineer and young Nikolai (born 1881 in the fortress of Novo-Georgievsk) was destined to follow in the parental footsteps. He was educated at the Cadet School at St Petersburg, and although he had left soldiering as a profession, and studied at the St Petersburg Conservatoire under Rimsky-Korsakov and Liadov, he was recalled to the colours on the outbreak of war in 1914 and served as an artillery officer at the front during the whole of its course.

After the October Revolution he was transferred to the General Naval Staff, where he served until he was engaged (in 1921) as Professor of Composition in the Moscow Conservatoire. In this capacity he became the leading teacher of the Moscow School of Soviet Composers.

Myaskovsky's Opus 1 dates back to 1904, and before the 1914 war he had composed three symphonies (1908, 1913, 1914), symphonic poems *Silence* (E. A. Poe) and *Alastor* (Shelley), as well as other works in smaller forms.

His early compositions, though of great beauty and musical individuality, are characterised by extreme introspection. But those of the last ten years have become gradually more and more serene and optimistic, providing therein a kind of symphonic commentary on the expanding horizons of the life of the people and of the artist in the Soviet Union.

### *The History of Soviet Music*

A symposium of material and documents dealing with the history of Soviet music is being published this year. One of the main sections of the first volume will consist of a number of articles on the development of Soviet composition in every republic of the Soviet Union. These will deal with the questions of the development of Soviet opera, Soviet symphonies, and mass genres.

The next section, dealing with works of an analytical character, is devoted to outstanding Soviet compositions, such as operas by R. Glière, I. Dzerzhinsky, and U. Gajibekov; symphonies by N. Myaskovsky, S. Prokofiev, Y. Shaporin, A. Khachaturyan, D. Shostakovich, and others, as well as songs, chamber music, etc.

*New Soviet Operas*

The Pailashvili Theatre of Opera and Ballet in Tbilisi recently accepted and put on *The Deputy*, a new opera by S. Taktatishvili, based on a libretto written by G. Taktatishvili.

Brailovsky, the Leningrad composer, recently finished the music for *Kondrat Boulavin*, a new historical opera based on Zadonsky's libretto. It pictures the events of the national insurrection which rose on the Don and embraced a vast territory along to Volga and in Tambov and Voronezh regions in Peter I's time.

*A Maker of Violins*

The workshop of L. V. Dobryansky, the famous violin maker, recently celebrated the making of its thousandth violin, each violin being exquisitely made.

During his more than forty years of violin-making, over five thousand instruments have passed through the hands of Dobryansky. The "U.S.S.R." violin, which Dobryansky made last year, is now in the Moscow Conservatoire.

F. C.

## GENERAL NOTES

## MOSCOW UNIVERSITY

TWO important dates, closely associated in the history of Russian culture, were marked in the Soviet Union at the beginning of 1940—the 185th anniversary of the Moscow University and the 175th anniversary of the death of Lomonosov.

The Moscow University was the first to be founded in Russia. Lomonosov was called by Pushkin the "first Russian university," an apt description of the universality of this "Mouzhik from Archangel," who was a pioneer in chemistry, wrote poetry, studied meteorology, laid projects for the Great Northern Sea Route, and founded universities.

The Ukase founding the Moscow University was signed by the Tsaritsa Elizabeth on 12th January 1755. The



University was assigned the premises of a chemist's shop, it being considered out of the question to spare a mansion or palace, or even a royal stable.

Three faculties were formed—Law, Medicine, and Philosophy. During the first years each faculty numbered one student!

Among the first students of the University was Denis Fonvizin, who relates of it: "Our studies were quite haphazard, because of our childish laziness on the one hand and the incapacity and inebriety of our teachers on the other."

In 1786 there were more than 100 students. The famous architect Kazakov was commissioned to erect the University building, which was completed in seven years, and the University at last removed from the chemist's shop.

The University precincts have produced Griboyedov, Belinsky, Herzen, Turgenev, Pirogov, Chekhov, Timiryazev, N. E. Zhukovsky, and other famous men.

In Lomonosov's day young people of the "commonalty" were not admitted to the University. Later 90 per cent. of Lermontov's fellow-students were of "blue blood," and in 1913 the great majority of students of the Moscow University were children of the nobility, the clergy, merchants, etc.

To-day all the students of the Moscow University, and their number exceeds 5000, are children of the working people.

In 1939 there were 2989 applications for the Moscow State University, but only 1913 could be accepted. For every two vacancies in the physics faculty there were eleven applicants. The geology and soils faculty, which attracted least pupils, had more than two applicants for each vacancy.

About 2000 students were accepted.

The Moscow State University is to-day one of the greatest cultural institutions in the country.

Moscow is being consumed by an educational fever. More than a million children, adolescents, and adults study in the various educational establishments of the Soviet capital—in schools, in special courses, in technical schools, in

colleges and the University. In 1913-1914 there were 57,600 people studying in Moscow. In 1938-1939 the number of pupils and students was 1,112,500. Of these, 608,300 attended elementary and secondary schools, 4500 studied in the workers' faculties, 37,900 in technical schools, 95,000 in higher educational institutions, 21,800 in factory vocational schools, 50,500 in advanced schools for adults, 90,800 in schools for illiterates and semi-literates, 199,500 attended various "technical minimum" courses and schools, and 4200 attended preparatory courses for technical and higher schools.

#### EDUCATION IN WESTERN UKRAINE AND WESTERN BYELORUSSIA

Under Polish rule the 8,000,000 Ukrainians and 3,000,000 Byelorussians were denied educational opportunities. According to the Polish official Minor Statistical Year Book for 1938 the educational conditions in Poland were as follows:

	<i>Polish</i>	<i>Ukrainian</i>	<i>Byelo-Russian</i>
Pre-School establishments . . . .	1715	11	Nil
Elementary schools . . . . .	28,337	496	8
Secondary schools . . . . .	756	23	1
Universities and colleges . . . .	24	Nil	Nil

Illiteracy among the adult population reached 48 per cent. and often more. The Soviet authorities have introduced the same educational opportunities for the Ukrainians and Byelorussians here as exist in the rest of the U.S.S.R., the most important being that education must be given in the language of the people. The Soviets have already spent millions of roubles on education here. As an example, in the Lvov region alone, besides a large number of elementary schools, 158 secondary schools have been established. In this region 6700 unemployed teachers have found work. The Ukraine and Byelorussia are sending experienced teachers and directors, text-books, and equipment to Western

Ukraine and Western Byelorussia, and have given considerable aid in the elimination of illiteracy. Institutes for further training of teachers, District Pedagogical Bureaux, as well as a new training college, have been set up.

#### M. V. LOMONOSOV, 1711-1765

Lomonosov was born of fisher peasants in the tiny village of Denisovka, now Lomonosovo, on a small island at the mouth of the North Dvina River. From his early youth he showed an all-devouring intellectual curiosity. United to a stubborn resolution to learn the how and why, it enabled him to overcome the extreme of hardship—even to starvation—in his efforts to obtain education.

Success attended his efforts when in 1736 he was one of a number selected from the Moscow Monastery school, to go to the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences. That same year he was one of the three students sent to Germany to study mining and metallurgy.

This was merely a beginning. Soon his interest spread to other subjects and before the end of his life he had produced notable contributions to very many branches of science.

His main interest and his greatest achievements were in chemistry, achievements which owing to the backwardness of Russia were for long unrecognised. He was the first to introduce weight, measure, and number into his chemistry teaching. He foretold the importance of mathematics to chemistry and physics, and of chemistry to physics. Much that is now accepted as scientific truth was first enunciated by him. Lomonosov was equally interested in electricity, geology, meteorology, and astronomy, to the knowledge of all of which he made serious contributions.

He had a practical interest in science too. He carried out 2200 experiments in order to find the best formula for coloured glass for mosaic work. He compiled maps of the Russian state, published the first grammar of the Russian language, and interested himself in the Northern Sea Route, which rightly, he foretold as practicable.

To all his scientific activity he added literary activity. He was the first to use the fresh, vivid, and simple idiom of

the peasant folk in poetry, which it is claimed laid the foundation for Pushkin's poetry; and so highly esteemed was he in this respect that he was frequently commanded by the Court to write odes.

His neglect by reactionary Russia has been made good by the Soviet Government, and his dream of an educated country in which science holds a pre-eminent position is to-day coming true.

#### CENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF A. G. STOLETOV

A hundred years have passed since the birth of one of the most remarkable Russian physicists of the last century, Professor Alexander Grigorievich Stoletov of the Moscow University.

Stoletov's work, the best of which deals with electricity and electro-magnetism, was highly esteemed by our own physicist Maxwell.

His investigations of photo-electric phenomena represent the crown of his achievements.

His investigations in the field of photo-electric phenomena were used by J. Thomson as a basis for the formulation of the theory of the electric conductivity of gases.

One of the most fruitful of his activities was the organisation of a physics laboratory in the Moscow University, the absence of which had forced Russian physicists to go abroad to carry on their experimental work.

Stoletov was both organiser and teacher, and the development of physics in Russia owes much to him.

#### THE MOSCOW PLANETARIUM

Thousands of schools, clubs, museums, houses and palaces of culture, and other institutions of education and culture, have been built in the U.S.S.R. during the past ten years; among these establishments an outstanding place is occupied by the Moscow Planetarium, built in 1929.

During its ten years of existence the Planetarium has accomplished an enormous amount of work in popularising

science and spreading among the general public the foundations of a proper understanding of the universe.

The Planetarium uses various forms of propaganda, and makes use of an apparatus which reproduces an exact picture of the sky with its stars; films, slides, and other visual means are also utilised. Popular lectures on astronomy are delivered during the day. During the Planetarium's ten years of existence 16,500 lectures were read to a total audience of about 7,000,000 people. In the Planetarium's theatre are staged plays dealing with the lives of the founders of modern astronomy—Copernicus, Bruno, and Galileus; 370,000 people have visited this theatre during the past two and a half years.

Workers, collective farmers, employees, and Red Army and Navy men are eager visitors of the Moscow Planetarium. Schools make wide use of it in the study of geography, physics, and astronomy. More than 700,000 school-children visited it during the ten years. The youngsters, who visit the Planetarium in ever-growing numbers, come here to listen to lectures and to peep through the telescope; many school-children are members of the amateur astronomy circle organised at the Planetarium.

Pilots of the Soviet Civil Air Fleet now successfully avail themselves of the services of the Planetarium for practical astronomy studies.

Hundreds of letters received speak of the people's great interest in astronomy. The Planetarium carries on a correspondence with workers and collective farmers and publishes popular pamphlets and posters.

During the Paris Exhibition the Moscow Planetarium made several appliances for the Paris Planetarium.

#### THE ARCTIC GROWS WARMER

Soviet scientists have gathered extensive material revealing the fact that in the northern hemisphere the climate is becoming appreciably milder. This has been particularly noticeable during the past twenty years.

The observations made and the data obtained during the drift of the Soviet ice-breaker *Sedov* are of special interest. During 1937–1939 the *Sedov* repeated to a certain degree the

famous drift of the *Fram* in 1893-1896. The temperatures observed during the drift of both vessels are therefore comparable. The mean temperature of the air during the time from September 1938 to April 1939 was 6° C. higher in the area of the *Sedov* drift than the respective temperature observed forty-four years ago by the *Fram*. And this was noted notwithstanding the fact that the relative bearings of the *Fram* were invariably more S. and S.W. than those of the *Sedov*.

The same phenomenon was observed in other parts of the Arctic too. The mean annual temperature at Spitsbergen taken during recent years was 2° C. higher than that previously registered in the course of many years on Franz Josef Land by 3.5° C. These changes are equal to a shifting of these islands 200 miles southward.

The softening of the climate outside of the Arctic, although not so pronounced, is still sufficiently noticeable. The mean annual temperature of the air in Archangel and Leningrad has risen by approximately 1° C.

Not only is a decrease to be observed in the number of ice-floes as a result of the change in the climate of the Arctic, there has even been a reduction in the volume of ice covering the Arctic islands. It has been registered that glaciers have noticeably receded during recent years on Franz Josef Land, Novaya Zemlya, and other islands. The Swedish geographer Alman, who in 1934 explored the glaciers of Spitsbergen, stated that they now melt quicker than their accumulations from snowfall, and he terms this retreat of Spitsbergen glaciers "catastrophic." If the Arctic continues to become milder at this rate Spitsbergen will be entirely freed of its ice-sheet.

The disappearance of Vassilyevsky Island, an islet composed of ancient ice and sand and clay deposits in the Laptev Sea, can be apparently accounted for by the warming of the Arctic.

Semyonovsky Island, situated near by, appears to be threatened with the same fate. In 1823 the length of this island was 10 miles, in 1912 it was only 3 miles, and in 1936 1.6 miles.

## AN INTERESTING EXHIBITION

An interesting exhibition of Armenian pictorial art was recently opened in Moscow, presenting a collection of the best works of modern artists and sculptors, as well as unique antique miniatures which for centuries were hidden away in the buildings of Echmiadzin, the centre of the Armenian Church.

The exhibition begins with a display of ancient architectural monuments which, together with the miniatures, explain the sources of folk-art in Armenia.

Many museums the world over may well envy the unique and rare exhibits on view in the second hall: forty-five Bibles and New Testaments, as well as seventy-five exact copies of their individual illustrations. The latest of these codexes dates back to 1649, some to the tenth century, while the oldest, the so-called Echmiadzin codex, which is mentioned in almost all history text-books, dates back to the sixth century. Bound in ivory, profusely carved, this unique exhibit is truly priceless.

Three Bibles of Torras Roslin, Armenian artist of the thirteenth century, are masterpieces of miniature art.

TWELVE-VOLUME EDITION OF V. MAYAKOVSKY'S  
COLLECTED WORKS

The first volume of the complete collected works of V. Mayakovsky (in twelve volumes) has been published.

The first section of the volume contains the early works of V. Mayakovsky, for the five years from 1912 to February 1917, and includes all poems written by him during that period, the tragedy "Vladimir Mayakovsky," and the larger poems "Cloud in Trousers," "War and Peace," and "Man."

The second section of the volume contains collected articles of his on literature, painting, and the cinema, published in various journals and newspapers during 1913-1915. The main text is supplemented with theses from all Mayakovsky's papers on poetry and painting read by him during 1912-1915, two letters to newspaper editorial offices, and texts of futurist manifestos, in the composition of which Mayakovsky took part.

## SCHOOL FOR YOUNG AUTHORS

In many cities, what are termed "young authors' study-rooms" have been organised by the executives of the Union of Soviet Writers. Here young writers are trained, through regular lectures, consultations, and meetings with outstanding Soviet writers and artists.

At Dniepropetrovsk a permanent literature studio functions, organised on the initiative of the young authors' study-room.

## 1940 ARTS FESTIVAL

Annual Arts Festivals of the national republics, held in Moscow, have become a tradition in the Soviet Union. In the past years the arts festivals of theatre, dance, song, etc., of the Ukrainian, Uzbek, Kazakh, Azerbaidzhan, and Georgian Soviet Republics have enjoyed great success. No less successful were the festivals of Kirghiz and Armenian art in 1939.

1940 will bring the arts festivals of Byelorussia and the second festival of Uzbekistan, as well as a review of the art of the Tadzhik people.

In 1940, for the first time, there will be a display of the arts of the Autonomous Buryato-Mongolian Republic, which will include two national operas, a musical drama, and a large concert programme.

## FIVE YEARS OF THE "GREKOV" RED ARMY STUDIO

In 1934 the first art studio was founded for the Red Army, in honour of the army artist M. V. Grekov, for the training of members of the Red Army as artists of military life.

The studio carries on an extensive correspondence with Red Army artists and gives consultations on the paintings they submit. During its five years of existence the studio has given an art education to more than 200 Red Army men and commanders. Its past students have taken part in eleven exhibitions.



## NEW BALLETS

On 20th December the second Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow gave the first public presentation of D. Khlebanov's ballet *Svetlana*, staged by the ballet masters A. Radonsky, L. Pospekhin, and N. Popko.

The ballet describes the development of a young girl, a native of the taiga, from her simple primitive state to full membership, through heroic deeds, of the group of pioneers which has come to build a new city.

The music of the ballet, which is full of melody and is emotionally rich, has made possible the creation of several very vivid characters and scenic situations.

The main rôles in the ballet are danced by Olga Lepeshinskaya, P. Gousev, and A. Zhoukov. The stage decorations are by R. Makarov.

Great excitement and much discussion has been aroused in the U.S.S.R. by the presentation of the new ballet *Romeo and Juliet* to Prokofiev's music, produced in Leningrad.

Prior to the production there was much scepticism as to whether Shakespeare could be turned into ballet without losing his essence. While some critics are still sceptical, most agree that *Romeo and Juliet* proved that it could be done. It has at any rate opened up exciting possibilities in the ballet world.

## THE CHAIKOVSKY CENTENARY

Innumerable concerts, performances of the operas, musical competitions, special gramophone records and films, exhibitions, inauguration of monuments and memorial tablets, etc., will mark the anniversary, for weeks before and after 7th May. All the principal theatres will be playing at least one of Chaikovsky's operas. The biggest concert organisations, including the Moscow and Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestras, have already for some weeks been carrying out cycles of concerts of Tchaikovsky's works. There is to be a "Tchaikovsky month," beginning in a few days' time, in all the large towns of the Soviet Union. A film dealing with his life will be shown and a Chaikovsky museum has been opened.

A message from Leningrad, in *Pravda* of the 18th, reports concert-lectures in the Houses of Culture and clubs of the city, and three operas in preparation at the Leningrad theatres. A Minsk telegram reports that units of the Byelorussian Special Military Command are preparing to mark the centenary by concerts from "The Queen of Spades," the Fourth Symphony, etc. Chaikovsky is to-day near and dear to tens of millions in the U.S.S.R. to-day.



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The Society was founded in 1924 as a non-political organization, with the object of collecting and diffusing in both countries information on developments in science, education, philosophy, art, literature, and social and economic life. It has arranged numerous lectures, exhibitions, concerts and film performances, and is always ready to obtain information for learned societies and institutions in Great Britain and the U.S.S.R., and for its own members. The minimum subscription to the Society is 5s. per annum.

The Society's calendar during the last quarter has included three major functions, as well as the showing of Eisenstein's great historical film *Alexander Nevsky* at the Phoenix Theatre on 21st January. So great was the demand for tickets that a second house had to be arranged. The Annual Dinner, with Sir Charles Trevelyan in the Chair, was held at Pagani's Restaurant on 23rd February; 133 members and guests attended, a number in excess of recent years. The guest was the Dean of Canterbury.

A very successful concert of Soviet orchestral music was given

on 13th April at the Queen's Hall, with Mr Alan Bush conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra in works by Shostakovich, Myaskovsky, and Khachaturian, with Miss Moura Lympny as solo pianist. Smaller meetings included lectures on psychology, architecture, and law in the U.S.S.R., and a combined exhibition and lecture by Mr Jack Chen entitled "A Chinese Artist Works in Moscow." The poet Mayakovsky was commemorated by a lecture and readings in the original, and in translation by Mr H. J. P. Marshall, one of whose translations appears in this issue.

The Society supplies much information about our country to the U.S.S.R. In response to inquiries from the U.S.S.R. the Society has collected and forwarded information on the following subjects: medical services, instruction of mothers in the care of children, ballet, the teaching of hygiene in training colleges, the organisation of sport and physical culture, various historical publications, the handwriting of Shakespeare, and exchange of material between puppet theatres in London and Moscow.

# CHAIKOVSKY CENTENARY CONCERT

## *Programme*

Overture-Fantasia "Romeo and Juliet"  
Pianoforte Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor  
Symphony No. 5 in E minor

*Solo Pianoforte:* CYRIL SMITH

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Leader: THOMAS MATTHEWS

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*Glimpses of World History* is in fact the product of his imprisonment—written originally between 1930 and 1933 in the form of letters to his young daughter, whose education he had little opportunity of supervising. Since then the whole work has been revised and brought up to date, but the letter-form has been retained which gives a simplicity and directness to the work, though, considering the circumstances in which it was first written, the treatment is never superficial. For *Glimpses of World History* is no mere narrative of events, valuable as the work is in this respect, but also a reflection of the author's personality. His outstanding intellect and sensitive mind make it unique in character.

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M. V. Lomonosov  
A great Russian Scientist  
(see note, p. 178)

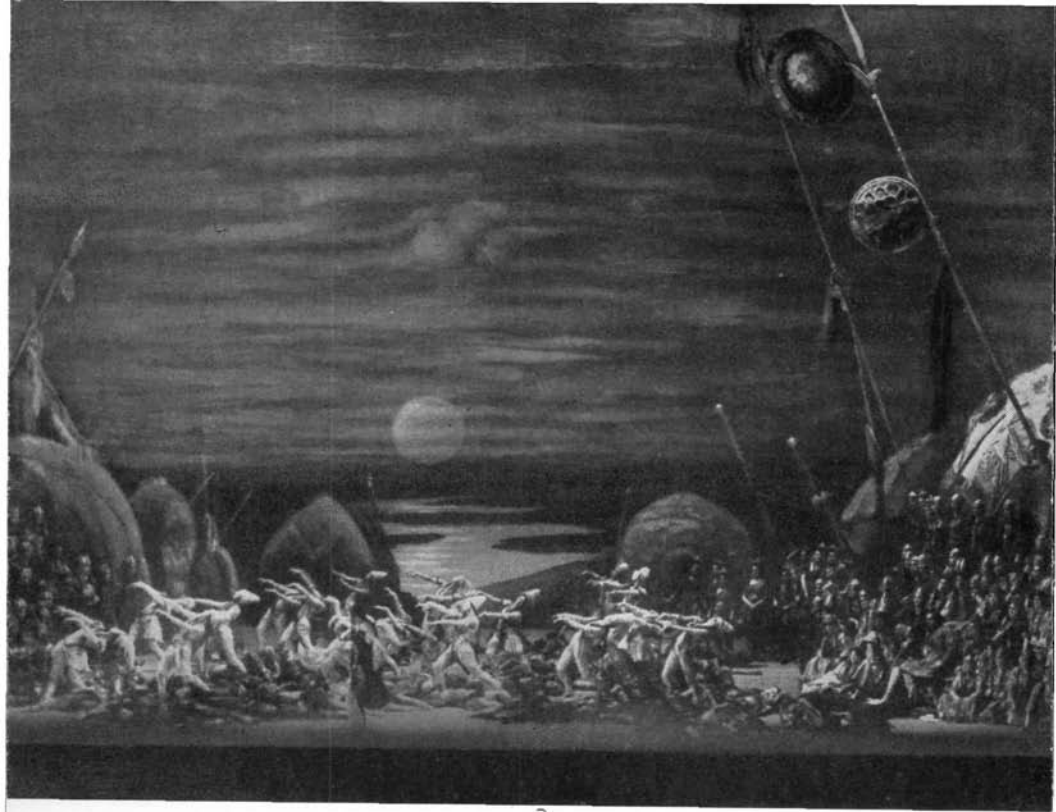


Shteyman and Rom as Tevye and Golda in "Tevye the Dairyman" presented  
by the State Jewish Theatre, Moscow





Rehearsal of a scene from Gorki's "Mother," production  
by Okhlopov



The Polovetski Dances from the opera "Prince Igor."

Act III from the opera "Absalom and Etheri," a Bolshoi Theatre production







poem. New production by the Byelorussian Theatre of Opera and Ballet

Act I of the opera "Ivan Soussanin," a Bolshoi Theatre Production





Scene from "The Fountain of Bakhchissarai." The ballet based on Pushk

Act II from opera "Absalom and Etheri," a Bolshoi Theatre production







Future Ballerinas. A lesson in the Department of Nationalities  
of the Leningrad Technicum of Choreography



Debonisha and Ivanova as two water bearers in Scene 1, Act I, of  
"The Prisoner in the Caucasus"



E. G. Chikvaidze as the Circassian maid in the ballet "The Prisoner in the Caucasus," produced by the Leningrad Opera and Ballet Company



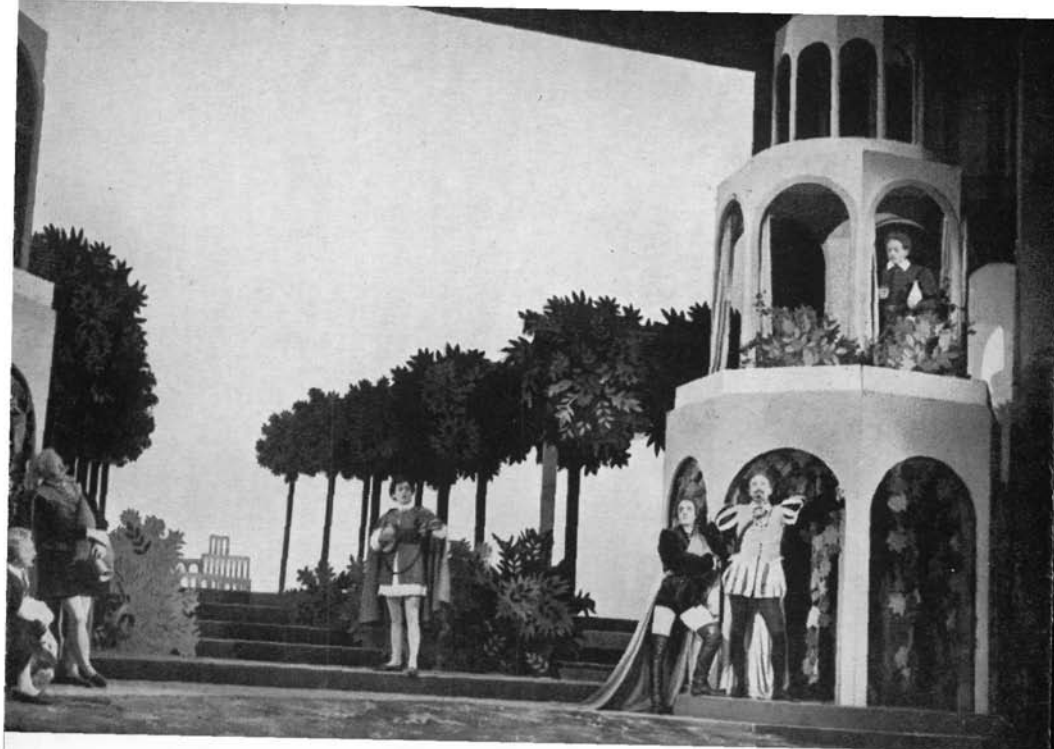


E. G. Chikvaidze and A. A. Orlov in Scene 1, Act I, of  
"The Prisoner in the Caucasus"



T. Vecheslava and V. Chaboukiani as Manije and Dj  
"The Heart of the Hills"

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Scene from "Much Ado about Nothing," Vakhtangov Theatre production

Scene from "King Lear" presented by the State Jewish Theatre, Moscow







Scene from the opera "Storm," music by Khrennikov, presented by  
Nemirovich-Danchenko State Musical Theatre

Scene from Act I of "Gipsies" presented by The Gipsy Theatre, Moscow



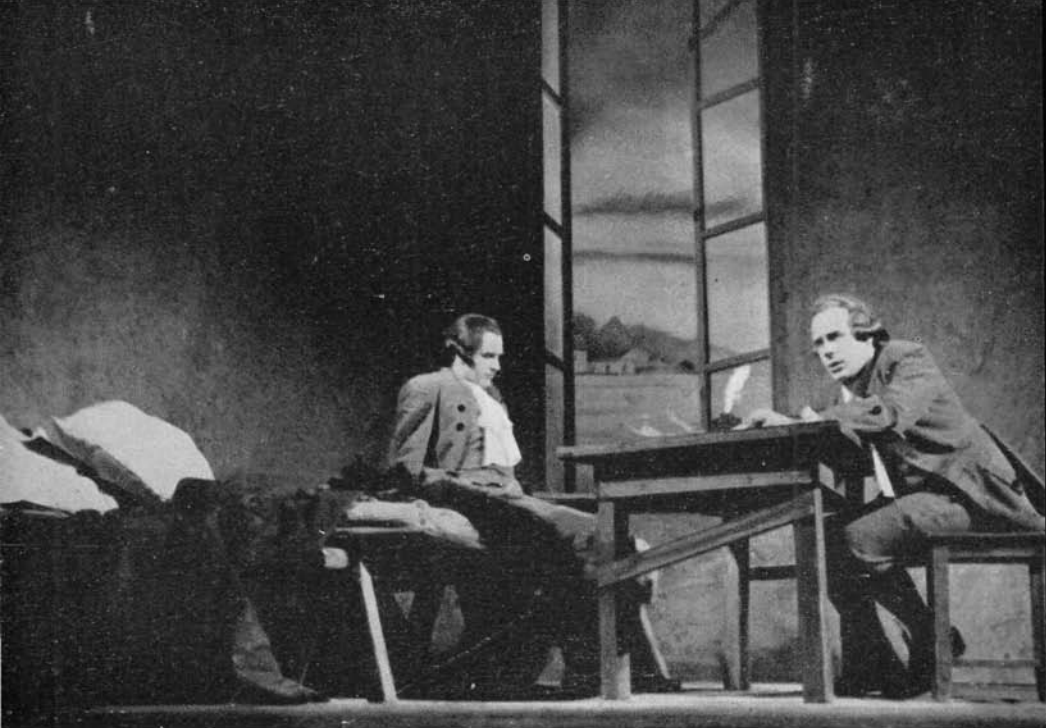


A still from the film "Tractorist"

Still from the film "A Great Citizen"







Act II, Scene 4, from the play "Lomonosov," in the  
Moscow Central Theatre for Youth

Act IV from the play "The Fairy Story" presented by the  
Theatre for Youth, Leningrad





Scene 7 from the fairy play "The Golden Key" presented by the  
Central Children's Theatre, Moscow

Scene 1 of the play "Lone White Sail" presented by the  
Central Children's Theatre, Moscow





Still from the film "The Man with a Gun." A soldier ignorant of Lenin's identity asks him the whereabouts of the hot water

A still from the film "Lenin in 1918"

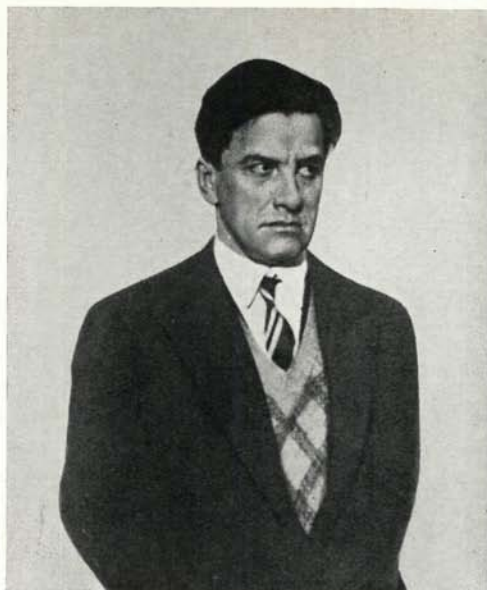




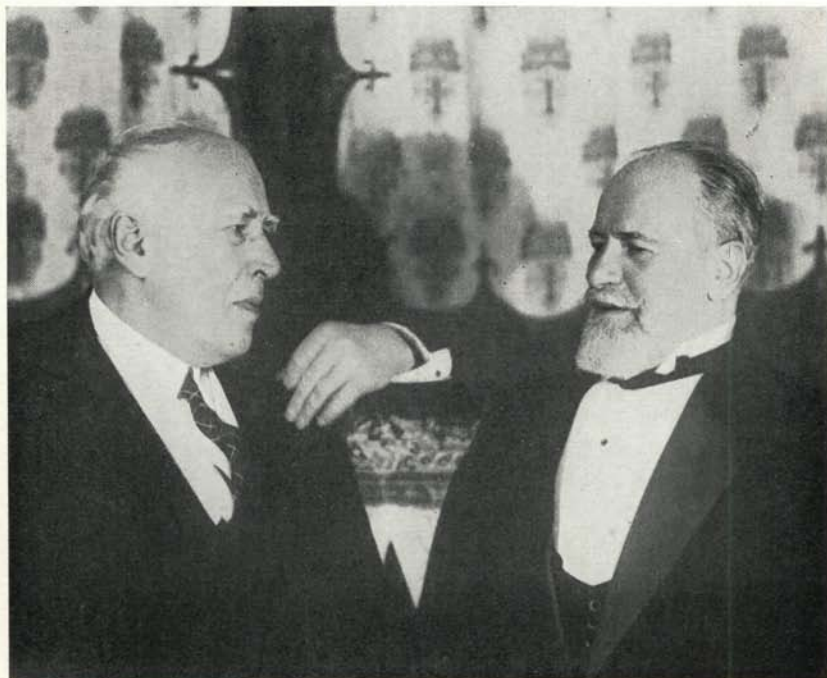


Chaikovsky

THE CHAIKOVSKY CENTENARY IN THE U.S.S.R.  
is being celebrated on a very wide scale, as  
may be seen from the note on page 184



Vladimir Mayakovsky—Poet



Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko. The two  
great theatre directors